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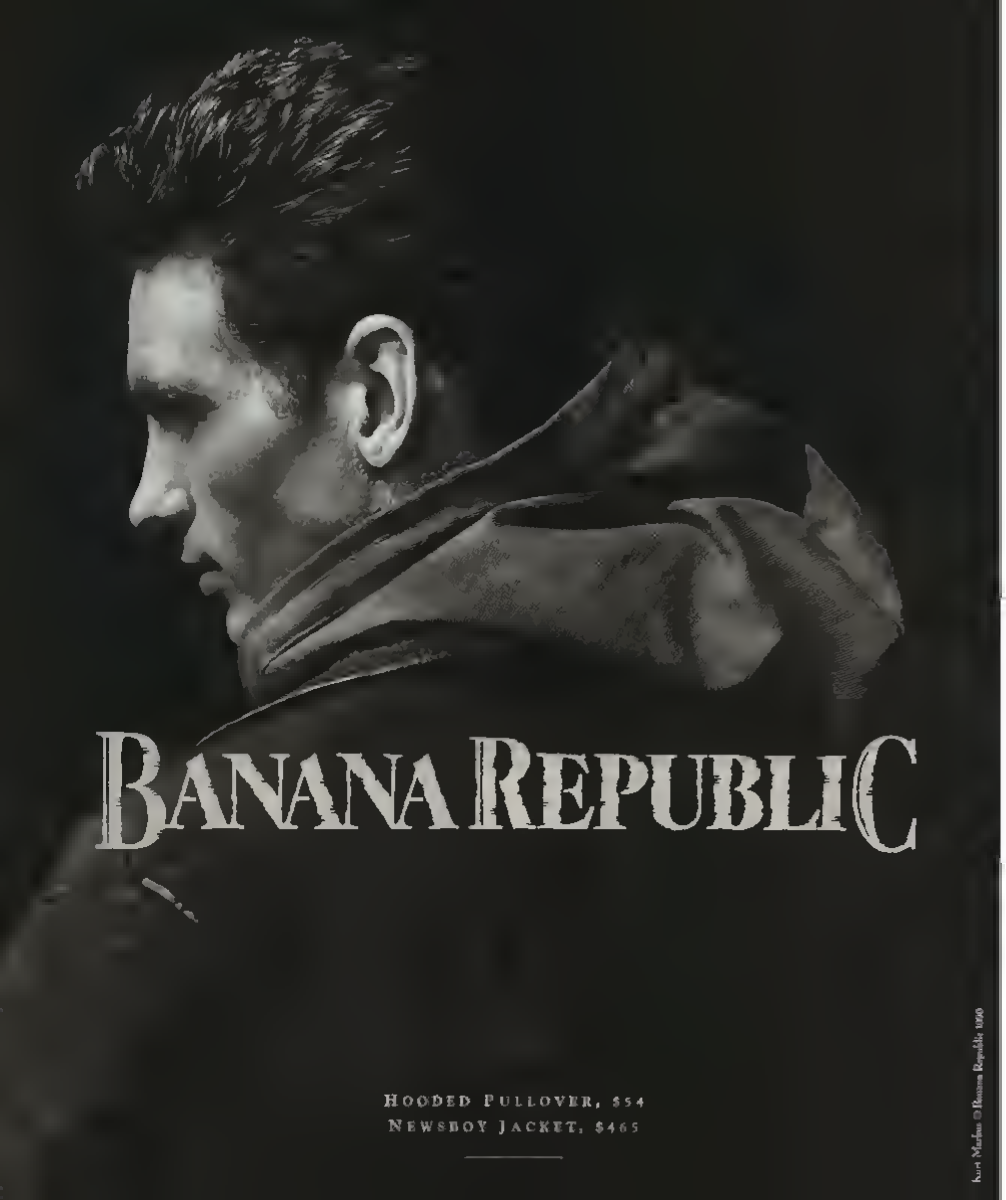
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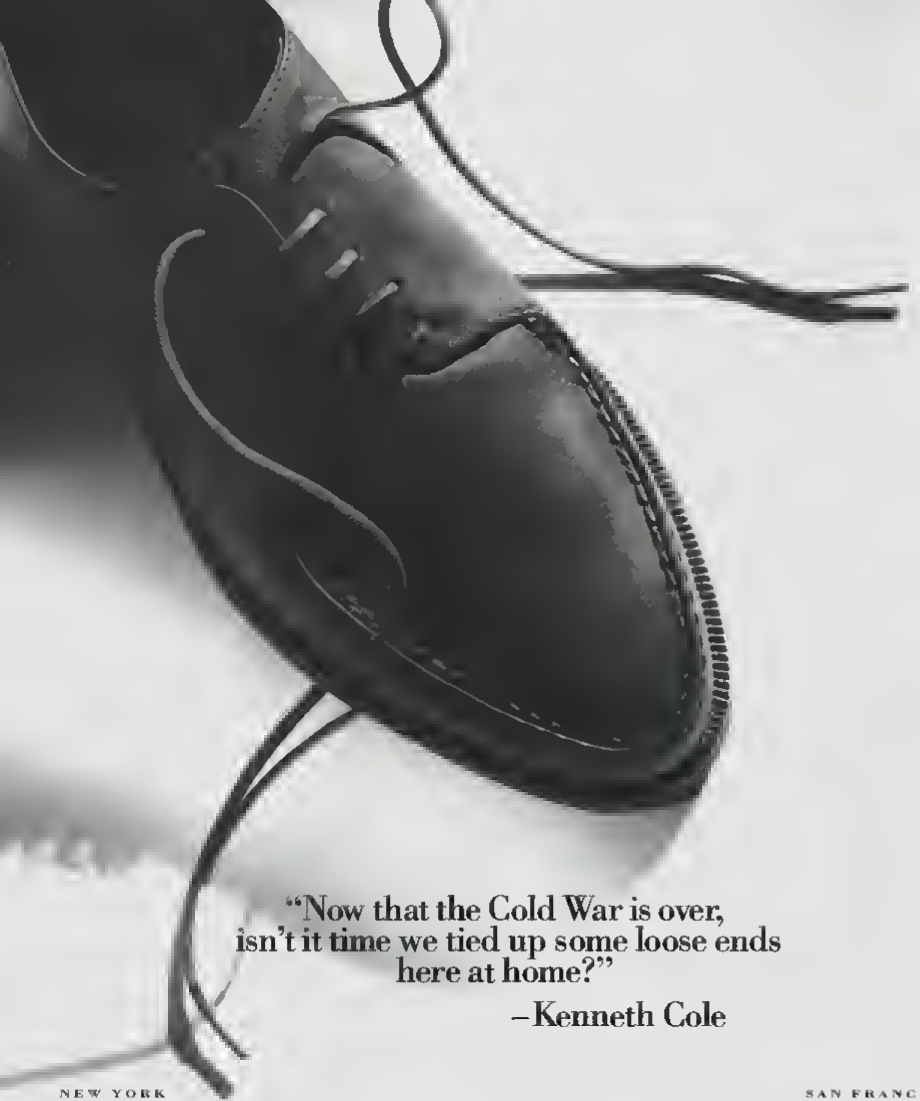


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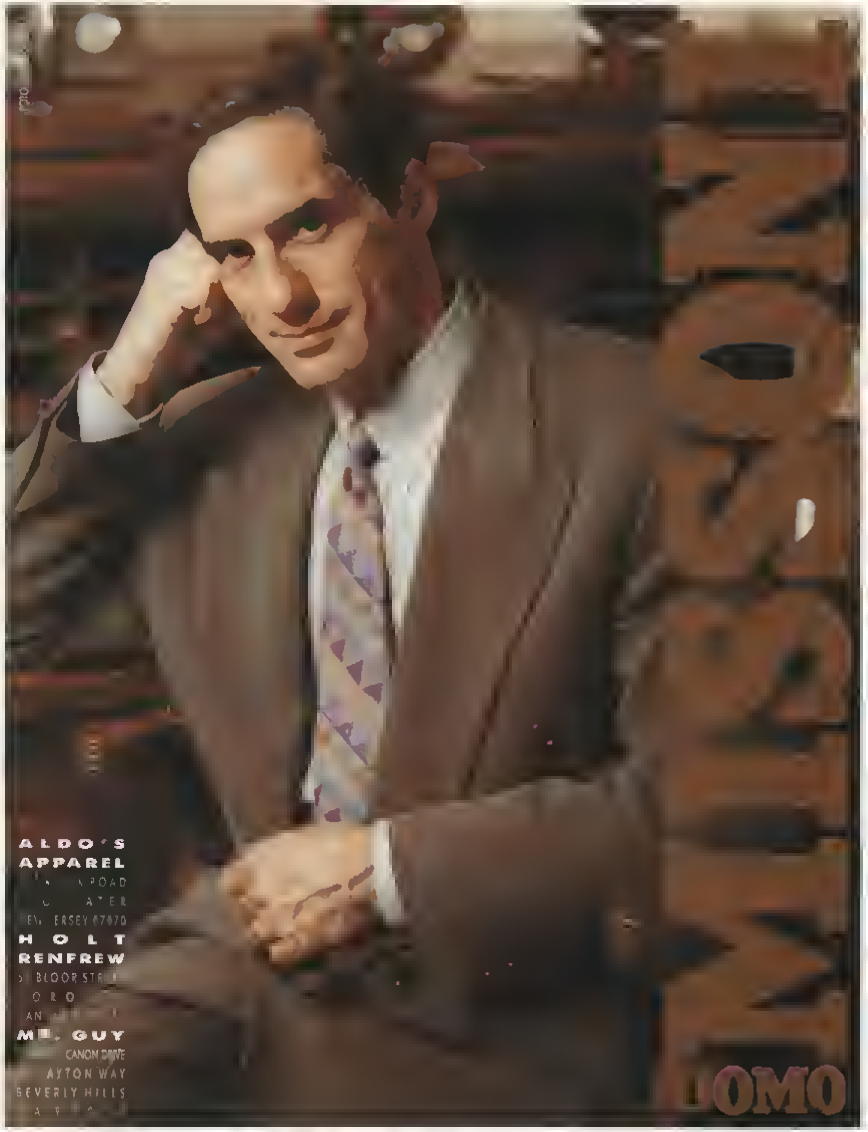
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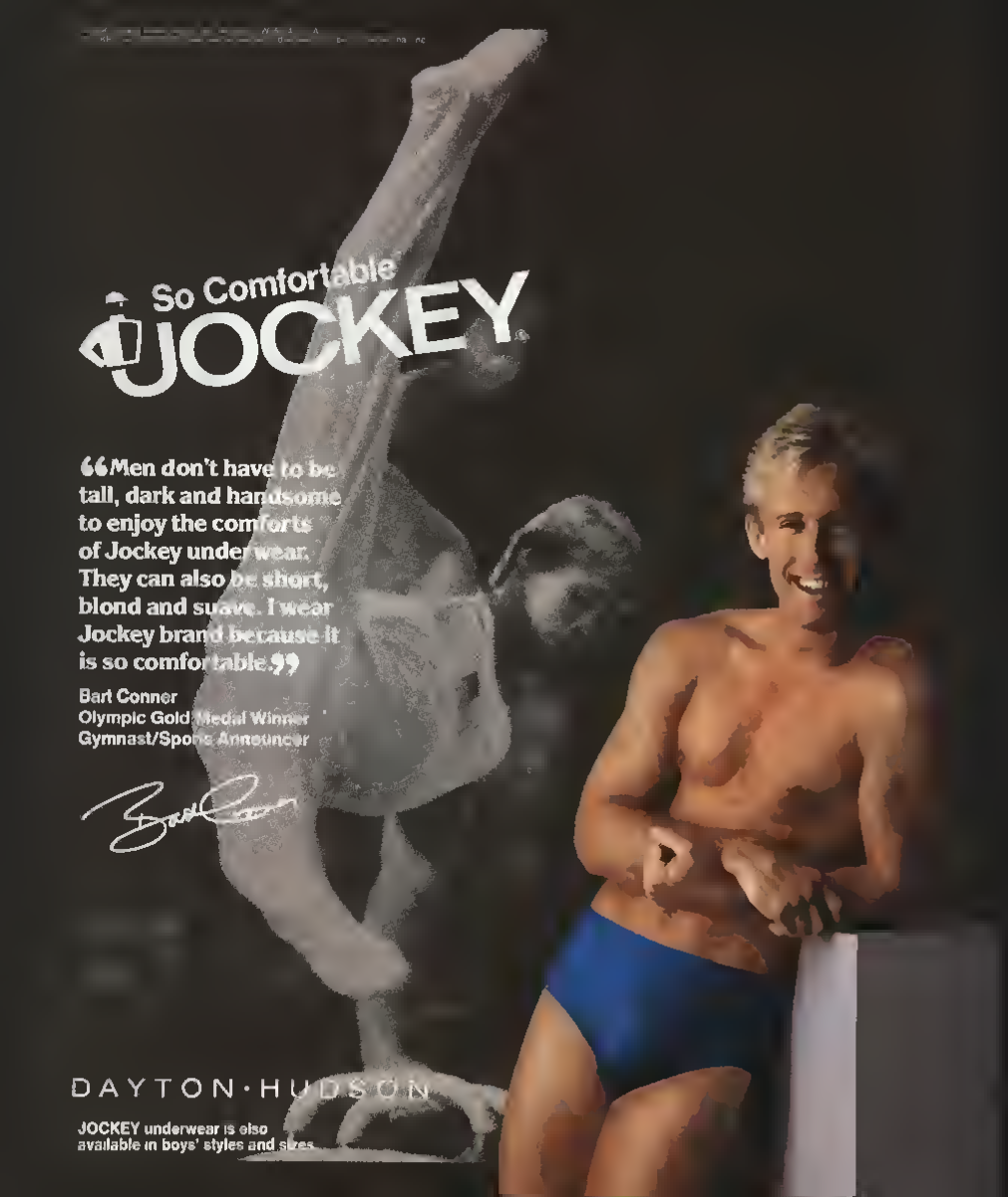
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The Sound and the Fury

LETTERS

A Fraction Off

The cover of your May issue shows a man at a table. He's reading a newspaper. Across from him is a nude female. This setting is captioned, YOUR MANHOOD: DO YOU HAVE MORE THAN 2.4 ORGASMS A WEEK? I think any real man would just go right ahead and make it 3.

Ellsworth Moor
Boaz, Ala.

Number Crunching

"How Old Are You *Really*?" (by Stefan Bechtel and Glen Waggoner, May) gave me a real shock. When I took the final exam on page 136, assiduously scoring exactly as instructed, I discovered that I died last year.

Chris Marconi
Los Angeles, Calif.

After reading "How Old Are You *Really*?" I decided to find out How Old I Am *Really*. To find out, I went to my health club and in one minute I did thirty-eight push-ups, then did another round of thirty-seven in a minute (with fourteen pull-ups in between). On the first of April this year I ran my 5.2-mile leg of the Jimmy Stewart Marathon Relay at an 8:42-per-mile pace. My systolic pressure is never over 125. From these and other statistics I have ascertained my Esquire-reader age. According to your scores on sit-ups, push-ups, minutes per mile, systolic pressure, orgasms per week, and weight/height, I am thirty-seven and a half years old. Yet according to my driver's license, I am sixty-eight and three quarters. And in California, I'm just an average old geek. You must be using New York statistics. Never mind. Thanks, Esquire, for making me thirty-one years younger than I am—though I can attest I have been a regular reader of your magazine since Scotty Fitzgerald and Ernie Hemingway were just pups.

Lorrin Peterson
Van Nuys, Calif.

Tube Socks

While I happen to share Pete Hamill's disgust both for American television and American drug usage, I am quick to point out his flawed reasoning in "Crack and the Box" (May). A simple rule taught in every first-year social science course is that coincidence is not causality. The fact that TV viewing and drug usage have increased at similar rates over the past fifty years does not mean that one is a cause or effect of the other. In fact, if Mr. Hamill had done his homework, he may have found something completely different. A number of studies indicate that since World War II, most Americans (especially teenagers) have enjoyed increased leisure time and discretionary spending ability, and that these have played a major role in increased television watching and drug usage. While these are certainly not the only causes, I think it is generally the case that television and drug habits are the result of similar forces, not results of each other.

Kraig R. Meyer
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Pete Hamill has done it again. As husband and wife pharmacists trying to raise our family to avoid the pitfalls of the licit and illicit drug scene, we have always had the vague, uncomfortable feeling that the root cause of the problem was much less complicated than our current generation of social scientists would have us believe. Hamill's "Crack and the Box" should be part of the discharge package of every maternity hospital.

Tom Lufkin, R.Ph.
Elaine Lufkin, R.Ph.
Grand Haven, Mich.

I was impressed by Pete Hamill's discovery that television is to blame for today's drugged-out society, but I believe the real culprit is another appliance, the microwave oven. *It* did not exist for the last, and sober, generation, either. Now we have become passive eaters, captives of dinner-in-a-box divided neatly into three portions: entrée, side dish, and sauced vegetable. Will our children expect life to be so neatly divided? Ready in seconds, dinner comes too easy, we have not earned this food. Too placid to demand excellence, we settle for beige gourmet. How comforting to be able to blame all the world's ills on that beeping epicurean.

Barbara L. Yost
Phoenix, Ariz.

Warren's Commissions

I just hope you don't turn Stephanie Mansfield loose to write a story about me. I mean it. I think it's just awful the way people poke such fun at Warren Beatty ("Beds," May). Even though I am sixty-six and Warren is only fifty-three, he and I have a lot in common, including the fact that we are very shy and can't talk to girls. I know all those tall tales about Warren and girls are meant to be funny, and not intended to be taken seriously, but how do you think he feels when he overhears them, or when friends at the library tell him about what you said? It just seems to me that knowing Warren has trouble meeting girls, makes a bad first impression, and has all the hang-ups associated with such problems, people would be more understanding and, at least, change the subject whenever he's around. That's what all *my* friends do.

John Martin Brown
Quincy, Ill.

Miller Lite

I read Mark Richard's post-modern story "Fun at the Beach" (May) while on vacation in Jesse Helms's North Carolina. Helms, of course, is the senator who would tie the tubes of the National Endowment funds that keep writers like Richard pumping. I'm sorry to say I felt Richard writes like Henry Miller but with less cause. While I found no reason to continue with the piece after two pages, I also thought, The right to write as he wishes is Richard's, the right to publish him is yours; the right to reject belongs to the reader. Me: Not Helms. Thanks for helping to keep things that way.

J. S. Oppenheim
Silver Spring, Md.

Swift Kicks

"I Just Say Oh No!" (by Charles Paul Freund, April), with its Swiftian splendor, is a fine commentary on the repercussions of this administration's obsessive efforts to deal with a primarily domestic problem through the use of international military showmanship, using "druggins" as a political device rather than concentrating on the real issues facing our cities today.

Michael Runnels
Cincinnati, Ohio

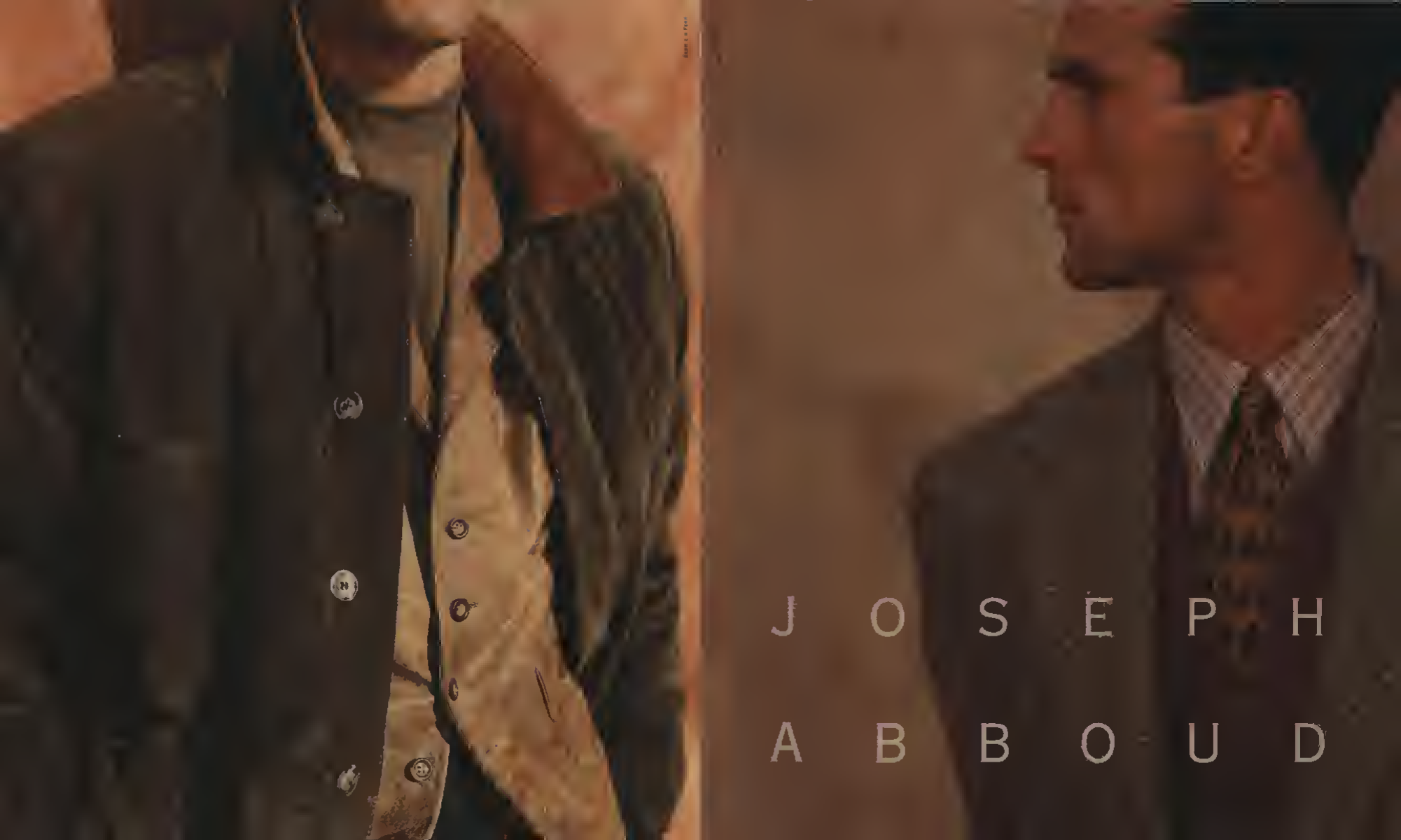
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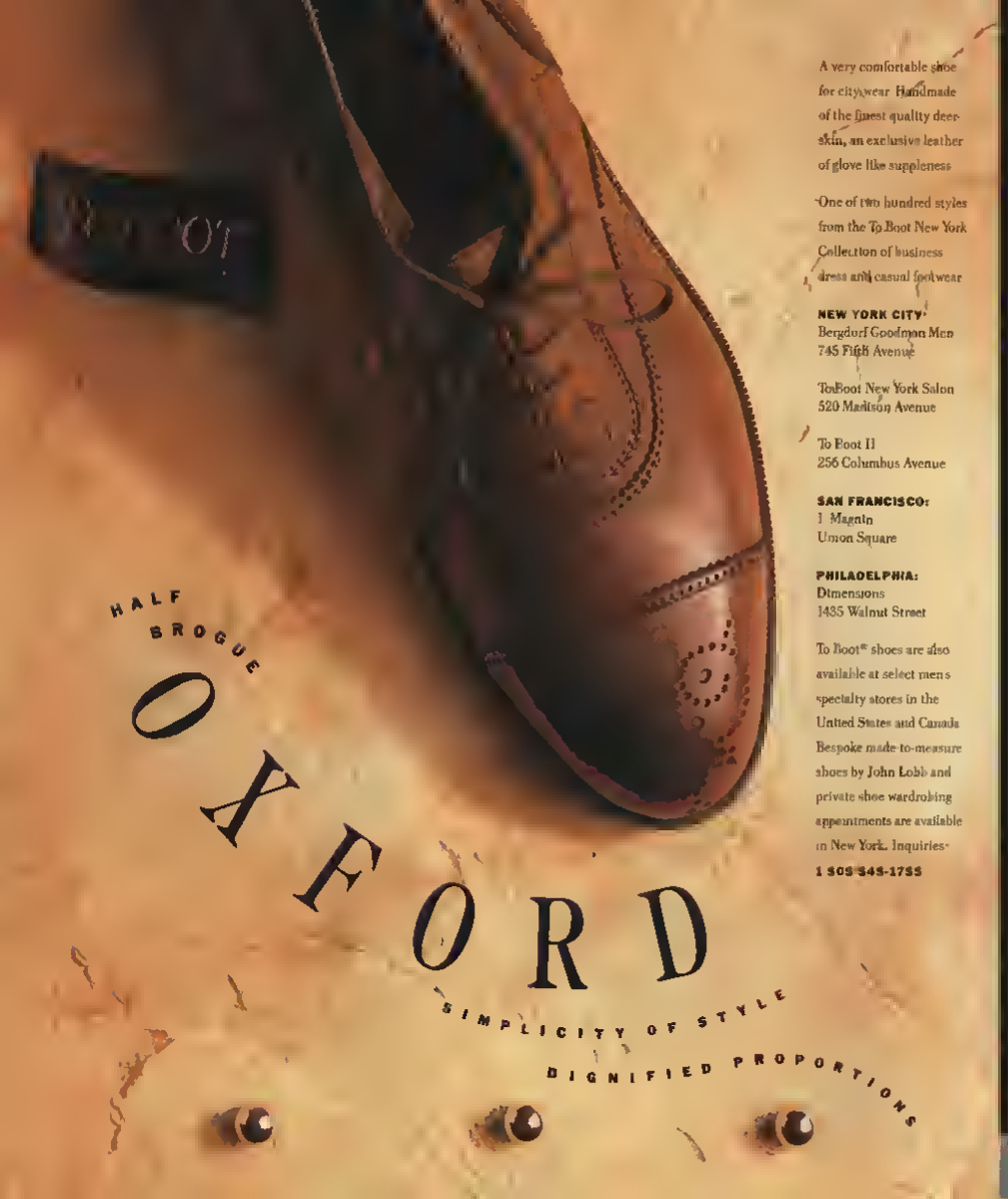
In his patronizing, smug, and downright grouchy letter published in your May issue, Gordon Lish accused us of being "not funny." To this stick in the eye we reply: Gordon Lish is ... dull. In a George Jessel manner, that is. Actually, if you remove the words "So Bernstein says to Feigenbaum" from his lexicon, the man becomes absolutely aphasic. As to the funniness of Kaminsky and Bing, let others speak. "I'd put those two guys right up there with Benny, Berle, and Bishop," observed poet and novelist Ira Others in the fall 1987 issue of *The Quarterly*. And who are we to argue?

Stanley Bing
Howard Kaminsky
New York, N.Y.

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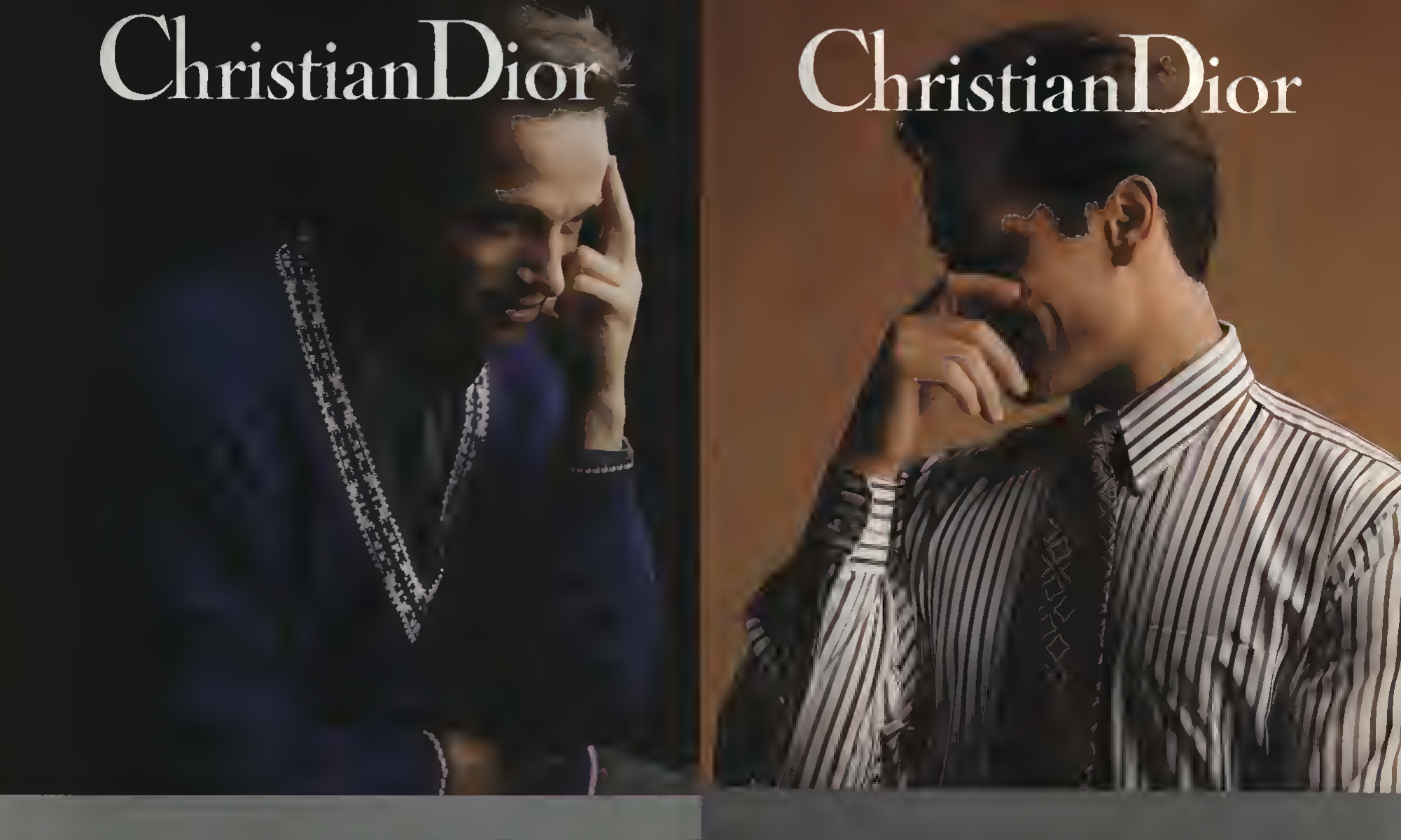
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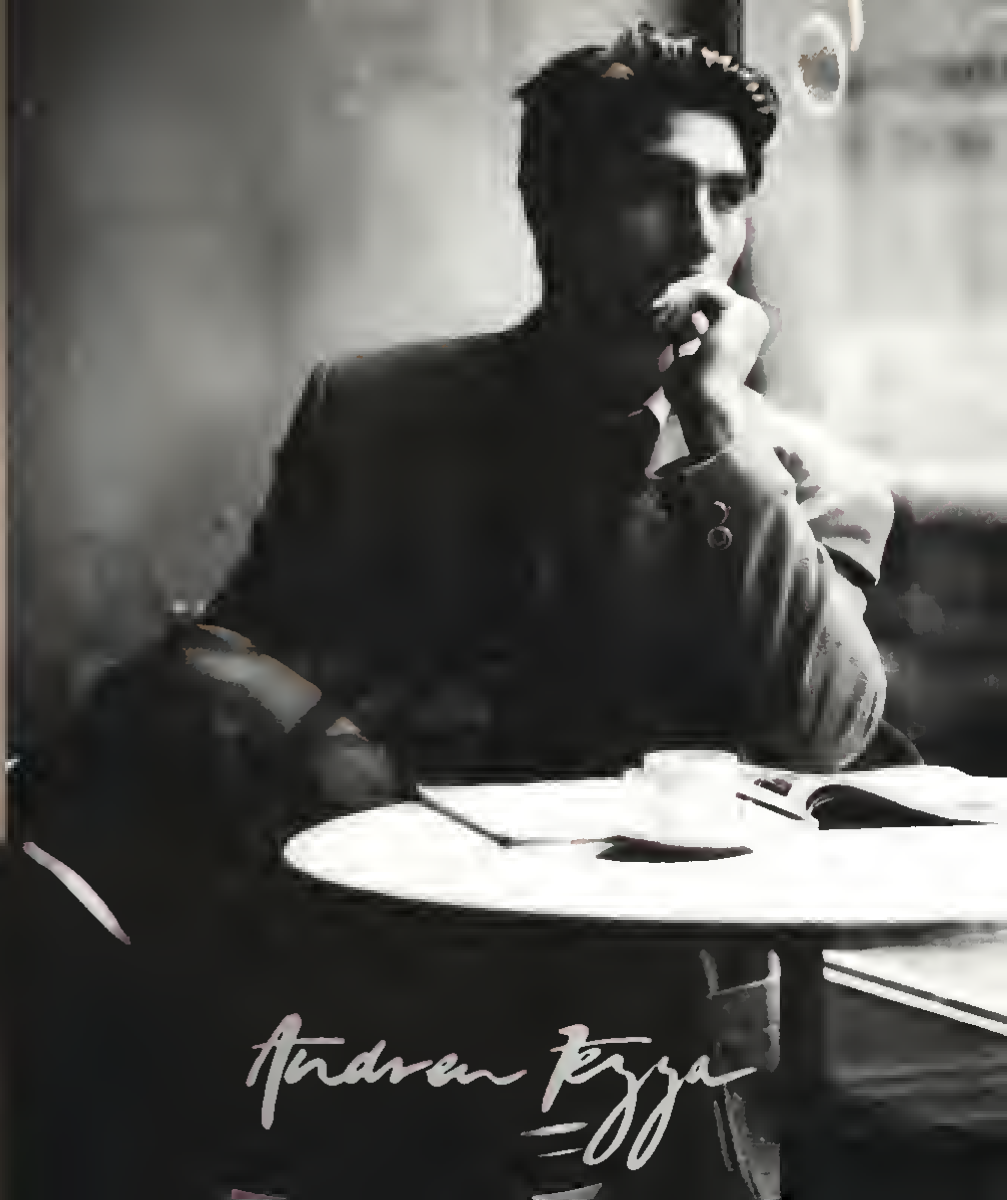
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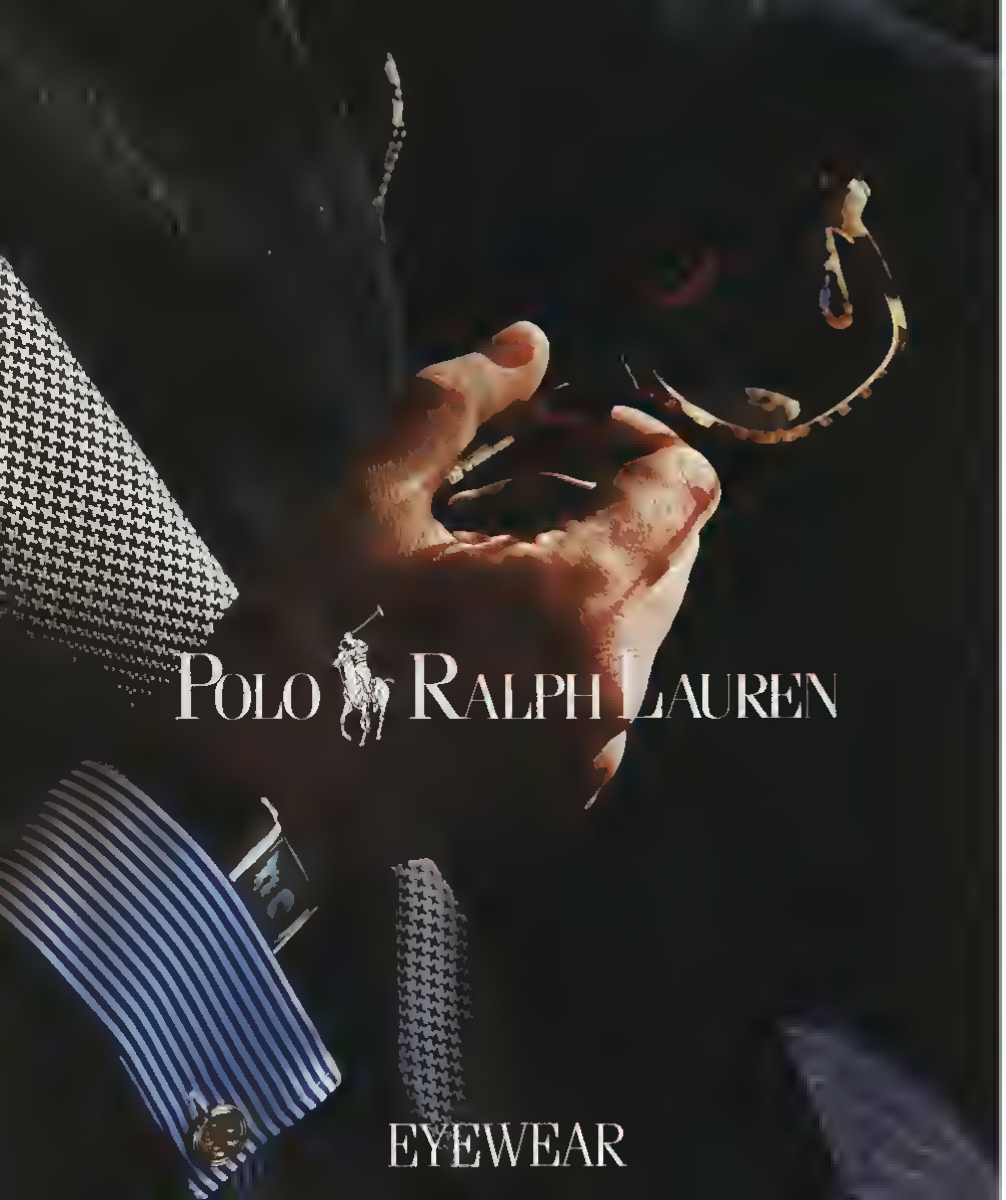
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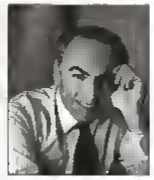


"I think of ties morning, noon and night. If I have insomnia, I count ties instead of sheep."

FOR ONE MAN IN A MILLION COUNTESS MARA 445 PARK AVENUE NEW YORK NEW YORK 10022







In the Soup

By Lee Eisenberg



THE METAPHOR MAY BE THIN and warery, but I'd like to say a few words about the cultural soup I refer to that bland potage made of bite-size pieces of undercooked television, tasteless bits of pop music, submerged carcasses of blanched novels and overcooked thrillers, yesterday's stale videocassettes.

What does the cultural soup taste like? Most of the time it's *mmm mmm* boring. And it's dished up nearly everywhere we go. We're fairly *drowning* in the tepid swill. Most Americans have more hours than ever to indulge themselves in culture, be it high or low, and each year brings new electronic gadgets, better engineered to laser our sound, sharpen our reception, and increase our choices. Still, we walk around pretty hungry.

Are we suffering from *too much* culture? Put a child on the floor with too many toys and he fast loses interest in all of them. Plunk us down in the rec room with too many channels and we'll zap ourselves into a stupor. Sure, now and again we'll run across something that takes hold of the spirit, and we'll sit there watching, or listening, or reading, transfixed. But mostly we fidget. We sample a moment of plot, a snatch of melody, a paragraph or two. We move on, in search of a new distraction.

But there's another side to this, and it gives me hope. It may be that we have been sipping consommé for so long that we could be working up a hunger for heartier stock. Give us cultural soup we can eat with a spoon! Hell, give us cultural *stew*! Not only do we crave the nourishment, we want our youngsters to know what the real stuff tastes like. So let the pot boil over! Throw in García Marquez. Add a dash of Marsalis. Sprinkle in some Sondheim. Flavor with Mark Morris.

But what, you are justified to wonder, does all this brothing at the mouth have to do with Esquire? With this month's issue, we are pleased to introduce a new section of the magazine. It will look at books, movies, theater, art, music, even advertising. It is called The Curve (page 105) and consists, as its subtitle attests, of "seven pages in the life of the culture." The Curve takes its name from that lately fashionable, omnipotent arc that has become familiar jargon: you know, *the curve*, the index line that distinguishes what is culturally passe (that is, what's *behind* the curve) from what is leading edge (that is, what's *ahead* of the curve). This new section begins by offering an illustrated, annotated curve of the month. It displays at a glance which ingredients in the cultural soup are currently zesty, and which have all the snap of tired leftovers.

The Curve isn't so much intended to tell us *what* to consume culturally (though it will) as much as it's meant to get us to *think* a little about what we do consume. And that's what separates it from the picks, pans, and report cards that float as listlessly in the media soup as the movies, books, et cetera, that they purport to evaluate.

ALSO HAPPENING this month is the first of four monthly specials we're calling Esquire's American Rebel Series. It, too, is conceived to help us draw greater sustenance from the everyday culture we munch on. Beginning with Jack Nicholson, our cover stories for the rest of the year will feature four people of mythic, mutinous proportion, veritable giants of modern culture. In addition to Nicholson, they will include a writer, an athlete, and a pop star—each of whom stands at the top of his respective heap.

As do the essays to come, Steve Erickson's "The Myth That Jack Built" (page 164) attempts to take America's temperature by exploring the life and work of a gloriously rambunctious individual. It is Erickson's contention that, starting in the Sixties, you and I had the temerity to create Jack Nicholson in our own self-centered, rebellious image. As *we* changed through the years, so did Jack. Now that none of us (including Jack) are the kids we used to be, we may have to face the conclusion that there's a joke in all of this—and that the joke (or the Joker) is on us.

Anyone for a chicken-salad sandwich on toast? Hold the chicken? ◻

Lee Eisenberg is *Esquire's editor in chief*

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

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Man At His Best

A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO QUALITY AND STYLE



FIRST-RATE

I'll Give You Close

By Lawrence J. Gallagher

WITH THE FIRST few strokes, I thought I had this thing working the way it was supposed to. But then the soap must have softened the skin too much, because the blade of the straight razor kept slicing through into the meatier stuff below. When I tried the other side, without lather, the razor got jumpy and sliced off a few small bumps. Had I been shaving my face instead of a kiwifruit, I would no doubt have been distressed by the carnage. But as it was, I just continued scraping brown fuzz off the fruit and popped the sucker into my mouth.

This wasn't my idea. Not entirely, anyway. A salesman of swanky men's accessories had advised that it was wise for the novice to practice before applying a razor to his face. "It sounds funny," he told me, "but if you can shave a peach without cutting it up, you can shave yourself." Peaches aren't always in season, though, and judging by the few sorry specimens I found, farmers must be breeding the fuzz off of them. Instead, I grabbed a handful of kiwifruits, which, it turns out, mimic the bearded face much more closely than peaches.

Finding the razor was more straightforward. At San Francisco's Exclusive Cutlery Shop, I picked one up for $42. Of course, you don't just leave with a $40 razor. You need the strop, those strips of pressed linen and leather on which you hone the blade, and that will cost you another $30. Then, to give yourself the moistest possible lather and avoid excessive bloodshed, you'll want to go with a shaving brush and some hand-milled soap. Good shaving brushes are made from badger hair, the best using only the soft white hairs from the belly of the beast, and they can set you back as much as $275 a throw. I skipped the brush holder and custom-made soap dish, but it still cost me $130 to get out the door.

It took a few days just to get over the cult of the blade. I would take it out of its little box and stare into it, think about putting it to my face, and put it back in the box. Holding a straight razor inspires dizziness not altogether unlike that which you feel on top of a skyscraper. I couldn't get rid of the sick temptation to run my tongue along its beautiful, smooth edge. The naked eye can only follow the thinness of the blade so far, beyond that point it becomes something of a mystery. As I worked on my kewis, my hand began to feel what my eyes couldn't see. I practiced with my left hand, which the cutler had said was the hand to shave the left side of my face. In my head, the clipping sound effects of *Dressed to Kill* gave way to that ringing you hear when you scrape burnt toast.

Your face, I'm glad to report, is really nothing like a kiwi. If it were that delicate, we would all look like Jerry Garcia—or Gerry Cooney. It took me forty five minutes just to shave the sides of my face and my neck, but I managed it without spilling a drop of blood. It's a bit strange watching yourself bring this killer to your throat, but when you feel the blade riding on your skin, you

I couldn't get rid of a temptation to run my tongue along its beautiful, smooth edge.

acquire some tactile understanding of what is happening.

Part of the reason it took so long is that I didn't want to stop. Like peeling paint chips or popping bubble-wrap, there is something inexplicably satisfying, I discovered, about shaving with a straight razor. I liked the weight of the blade and the way it felt with my fingers wrapped around the carbon-steel tang. I can see why this thing is such an accoutrement of obsession, later that afternoon I actually began to crave the feeling of the blade on my cheeks.

But does it give a closer shave? Not yet. With the return of the straight razor comes the return of skill to shaving, so presumably I'll get better with time. But if, as the folks at Exclusive claim, the main reason men are returning to the razor is that they want a closer shave, I can't imagine their not being sorely disappointed. (And sore, too, from trying.) The appeal lies not in its performance but in its permanence. In a world of disposables, it's a treat to work with a tool that's designed to last longer than you.

And when it comes to kewis, it has no peer. After weeks of painstaking research, I can safely say that there is no better way to shave them than with the trusty straight razor. ■

EDITED BY ANITA LECLERC

KENNETH WILLARDT



CLASSICS

The Linen Question

By John Berendt

ITALIAN scientists conducted an experiment a few years ago to find out if it made any difference whether a person slept on cotton sheets or linen sheets. For five consecutive nights, they monitored the sleep patterns of twelve adults whose beds were made up alternately with cotton and linen. It turned out that people slept better on linen. They slept longer, and they had more REM sleep, during which dreaming occurs and brain functions are restored. The scientists discovered, furthermore, that when people slept on linen they woke up in a better mood.

This news will not surprise anybody knowledgeable about linen. Compared with cotton, linen is cooler, more absorbent, faster-drying, softer, stronger, and more durable. It is also nonstatic, does not shed lint, and improves with age. With all that going for it, you would expect linen to be a great favorite in this country, but it's not. Few of us have ever slept on linen sheets even once, and we don't often wear linen clothing. Most of us aren't even sure what the word *linen* means, because in addition to its original definition ("a cloth made of flax"), it is used as the generic term for sheets, towels, and tablecloths of *all* fabrics. At Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale's, as elsewhere, you will find that the "linen department" does not sell linen sheets, only cotton sheets.

The fact is, linen accounts for only 1 percent of all the fabrics used in America today—cotton for 50 percent, synthetics 44 percent, and wool 5 percent. In shunning linen, we are denying ourselves one of the world's oldest indulgences, one that has not been much appreciated in this country since Colonial times.

The production of linen requires a series of intricate procedures, some of them still accomplished by hand. Since we no longer grow flax or weave linen in America, we have to import all of our linen—nearly $1 billion worth a year. When you ask why we don't produce linen ourselves, the first answer you get is that it's labor-intensive. I don't know about you, but I'm a little tired of hearing that refrain. It isn't any less labor-intensive anywhere else, but never mind. Indeed, there is every reason to grow flax here, because we get other products from it besides linen—linseed oil, pharmaceuticals, feedstock, particleboard, and paper. In case you didn't know, out dollar bills have a 25 percent linen content, all of it imported. Which means we don't even grow our own money! Too labor-intensive.

Aside from the work it involves and the fact that it costs more than cotton, linen has always had one other fault: wrinkles. This is caused by the cellular structure of the flax fiber, which is the source of linen's strengths as well as its drawbacks. The fiber is made up of hollow cells with porous walls. The cells absorb moisture and then quickly pass it off into the air through evaporation, which is a cooling process. In this way, each cell acts as a microscopic air conditioning unit. The cells, however, are not elastic. They hold a crease instead of relaxing and smoothing themselves out.

We Americans are hypersensitive about wrinkles. It embarrasses us to stand up and discover we are wearing a map of our lap across the front of our slacks. Somehow, this doesn't seem to bother Europeans very much, and you can read into that what you will. We are too busy striving to perfect our crisp, neatly pressed "power image," and wrinkles have no place in it. Linen clothes have to be ironed a lot, too, so that's another reason we avoid them. Too maintenance-intensive. At Porthault, the New York specialty shop where a linen sheet can cost upwards of $1,000, one is urged to iron the sheet a second time—on the bed, to get the folds out.

"I've been fighting that battle for years," says fashion designer and longtime linen exponent Alexander Julian. While it is unlikely that Mr. Julian will ever coax America out of its abhorrence of wrinkles, he has done his best to take the wrinkles out of linen. A few years ago, he noticed that an old linen shirt he'd washed fifty times did not wrinkle as much as when it was new. "The washing broke down the cell structure a little," he says, "and the fabric became more flexible."

Julian took the shirt to Solbiati, the high quality linen mill in Italy, and asked if they could devise a finishing process that would achieve the same effect. Solbiati developed a prewashed, twisted strand linen that retained all the classic linen features but didn't wrinkle any more than cotton. Other mills have produced similar "high performance" linens, and now it just seems possible that Americans may finally be won over by linen. But it won't be because linen is the coolest of warm-weather fabrics or that it improves one's mood in the morning. It will be because, at long last, linen will require almost no work. ☙

When people slept on linen, the scientists said, they woke in a better mood.



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LIVING QUARTERS

The Pod Wars

By Phil Patton

WHEN THE merchants of Venice first imported it from Mocha on the Red Sea, circa 1615, coffee was celebrated as what the historian Fernand Braudel called "the new drug." Today, we still see it as a drug—the only good drug, perhaps, the drug of capitalism (stock markets began in coffeehouses), but a drug nonetheless.

Ever notice that Juan Valdez, popping up with his mule in the supermarket aisles of TV ads, is a dead ringer for other Colombian farmers whose acreage William Bennett would like to defoliate? That even ordinary grocery store coffee now comes in bricks the size and shape of those impounded as evidence by the Miami Police Department? No wonder there is new paraphernalia to make coffee in its most concentrated form. We mean, of course, espresso machines, which, we're told, are now the fastest-growing category of small kitchen appliances.

Still, Krups reports, ignorance of espresso percolates widely through the land of Mr. Coffee. A recent survey found that 10 percent of folks in the South believed espresso to be an overnight-delivery system, and a few respondents checked off "exotic wild mushroom" as the correct definition of cappuccino. Espresso, of course, is simply coffee made with steam instead of water, cappuccino is espresso with steam-foamed milk.

To obtain espresso before the arrival of the new machines, you had to resort to public facilities. The brew emerged from hulking brass towers topped with eagle finials, or from red countertop blocks the size of a Fiat. Now, compressed in size the same way espresso compresses the force and flavor of arabica beans, these machines have come home.

Sure, you could try to make espresso and, theoretically, cappuccino, with a stove-top pot, like the Caffè Portofino I was given some years ago. This process, they say in Italy, is an art, not a science. The Portofino's instructions tell you how to work a steam lever till it sounds like a jet plane. The milk will be properly frothed "when the plane lands." (*"Quando l'aero atterra/quand l'avion atterrit/une das Flugzeug landet."*) Well, here's another translation: You'll learn how to make a cappuccino with this thing about the time you learn to land a fully loaded 747.

No, if you want espresso and cappuccino without art, automatically, scientifically, and in about twenty seconds, you need the jet engine itself: an electric pump machine. There are boiler machines, which use simple steam pressure and take longer to heat up, and there are pump machines, which add mechanical pressure to generate the caramel-colored *crema*—the head that is the sign of the finest espresso.

Once restricted to the big machines, pump technology has become compact and reliable enough for the home. The $500 Baby Gaggia, from the maker of commercial machines founded in 1949 by an actual Italian café owner, is probably the top model, but the smaller Gran Gaggia, the Krups L'Espresso Plus, the DeLonghi Bar Espresso, and the new Braun machines, which go for $150 to $300, are serious, dependable little engines.

You would think that Krups were the Krupps, the folks who made locomotives and artillery, by the way they fortify their "thermoblock" machines. The Krups L'Espresso Plus, maybe the best-looking machine of all, is a simple turret with faceted amber and red lights for CAFFE and VAPORE set into its black body like parking and brake lamps on a 700-series BMW. This is a look appropriate to function. We're talking one thousand watts of power, 150-pounds-per-square-inch pressure, and four feet of coiled tubing, all to generate what Krups eloquently calls "perfect froth."

You'd think Krups were Krupps, the way they fortify their "thermoblock" machines.

There is no stronger evidence of the arrival of espresso technology than the outbreak of feature wars among makers of the machines. You now have, for instance, "turbo action"—vital for the two thirds of espresso machine owners who make cappuccino. The "Turbo Frother Steam Jet" on Gaggia machines is a steam pipe ringed with a dotted line of tiny aerating holes. Braun's new E200 T and E400 CT models offer a steam-driven turbine.

But even with the machines' pumps and turbines, coffee must be loaded for each cup. Filling the ice-cream scoop-shaped coffee holder is not unlike filling a cannon with black powder and ramming it home before lighting the fuse. Hence the recent breakthrough: the "coffee pod," a premeasured amount of coffee bound in filter paper. They can be used in Gaggia, DeLonghi, and Krups machines, and look like oversize caps for toy guns. Toss one onto the holder, ram home the bolt, and stand back. The pod, espresso folks immodestly assert, is an advance every bit as important as the tea bag. We think of it as more like the replacement of the flintlock by the cartridge. The next step, surely, will be a machine with revolving pod holder, for rapid-fire, multiple shots—a veritable Smith & Wesson of espresso. ■

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Burn This

By John Riha

THE ESSENTIALS of gathering firewood haven't changed all that much since the Neanderthals first began warming their keisters by the flickering flames. You haul pieces of trees out of the woods and stick them in piles. Alas, miles of asphalt and strip malls separate most of us from the forests primeval, and it's a lucky few who can charge off into the hinterlands with pickup truck and chain saw.

Yet, there's the fireplace, sprawled out under a near crown of carefully selected mantel adornments, waiting to be fed. Or perhaps a faithful wood-burning stove, squatting stout and honest in a corner of the den. In either case, you need good wood. And good wood just doesn't grow on trees, you know. You find it in the Sunday classifieds, listed under FUELS. And you buy it from a guy named Mitch.

Mitch lives about fifty miles away, near a river. He has exactly four days' growth of beard, gloves with open finger holes, and a hitch to his gait from the time his chain saw bucked out of a slash pile and chewed up his fibula. Despite the rough edges, he's a smooth businessman with a bottom line to protect. Accordingly, I give full attention to my negotiations with Mitch, and I know that a thorough knowledge of the commodity is essential.

The basic unit of firewood measurement is the cord. A cord of cut and stacked wood measures 4 feet high, 4 feet wide, and 8 feet long, a total of 128 cubic feet, including the air spaces between the chunks. Mitch has at times tried to sell me short cords, medium cords, long cords, and face cords. This is all very well, as long as the volume of wood I get matches the percentage of the full cord price I am asked to pay. As far as cord requirements are concerned, four to six cords will see a wood heater and a 1,500-square-foot home through a New England winter. If you're a serious self-hypnotic, a half to a full cord should get you through an entire snow season of fireplace-induced trances.

The price of a cord is greatly dependent on the woodsiness of your location. A cord that costs $85 in West Suspender, Maine, costs $250 in Houston. In Los Angeles, $250 will buy you all the firewood you can lash to the luggage rack of a Mercedes 450 SL. Expect to pay more for service too. Mitch will happily deliver a cord of split and dried oak and stack it neatly in the back of my house for about $130. For $100, he'll just as blissfully throw it on my front lawn.

Species of wood affects price as well. In general, hardwoods, such as oak and hickory, cost more than softer woods, like pine and cedar. This is because hardwoods are more dense than their coniferous counterparts and store more heat, making them the more valuable fuel. A cord of oak, for example, can produce almost twice as many BTUs as a cord of pine.

The good news is that any wood will burn. Consequently, you may find woodophiles in your neighborhood gushing over their favorite firewood as if it were an especially clever child. Don't be outdone. Rejoin with the observation that perfect heat, longevity, and ambience can be achieved with a vigorous, crackling base of Douglas fir topped by two or three logs of bone-dry madrona and an aromatic sprig of fresh juniper.

Dryness, however, is critical to the burning properties of any wood. Wet or green wood simply spends too much of its energy trying to vaporize its moisture content, providing less warming power. Purchase firewood in spring or early summer and let it dry out over the warm months,

A cord of oak can produce twice as many BTUs as a cord of pine.

covering only the top of the pile with a sheet of plastic.

And should you pay a premium price for wood advertised as seasoned, assure yourself of the product's dryness by inspecting the ends of the pieces. Seasoned wood will display a handsome assortment of cracks, checks, splits, and fissures.

Three words about splitting wood: Do it yourself. Order your wood in large, unsplit rounds, which Mitch will gladly deliver at a discounted price. Then trot on down to Ace Hardware and pick up a six-pound splitting maul. Whap! Concentrate on getting pieces down to about four-inch diameters.

But why care, exactly? Why not just phone Mitch, have him throw a bunch of sticks out back, and call it a Saturday?

Perhaps because firewood has substance and character. It doesn't snake into our homes through droopy wires or underground pipes but rather sits, solid chunks of heat potential, waiting by the garage, patient in its purpose. We walk outside in open coats and undone boots, heft a few pieces in our arms, and carry them inside. In the ragged order of our woodpile, we are linked to our grandfathers, ancient peoples, Mitch, and a fine phylogeny of wood gatherers. E


1983 Car and Driver Ten Best List


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HONDA



THE DRINKING MAN

I'll Have What Dad Had

By John Mariani

WHEN MY FIRST son turned five, I began to think about what I could give him that he would cherish as a reminder of just how swell a guy his old man was. Any dull witted father can stuff stocks into a trust fund, and nostalgic hand-me downs are just part of the freight he'll carry anyway.

Then one day, while picking out a wine for dinner, I thought, That's it! I'll give him my old wines! Then I thought, Wait a minute, those are my wines I cared for them, aged them, and have every intention of drinking them up in the years to come.

But the idea had merit. Why not do what English gentlemen have done for centuries? I would lay down wines that are much too young to drink now, but that would be in peak condition when my son turned twenty-one. So every month I buy a bottle of wine for each of my two sons, now five and nine years old. I figure by the time they're twenty-one they'll each have close to two hundred bottles of wine they could *never* afford to buy on their own.

But how do you know which wines will not go bad somewhere around their tenth birthday? Well, you play it safe, and that means buying big, tannic, tried-and-true wines from the best recent vintages. And you just plain skip all white wines, 99 percent of which are made to be drunk as soon as you get them home. The most notable exception to this rule would be a sauternes, like Château d'Yquem, from years like '80 and '83.

How do you know which wines will not go bad around their tenth birthday?

No one really knows which California wines might make it past the year 2000, since most of them are made to be drunk young. Best bets would be Opus One, a Cabernet made by Robert Mondavi and the late Baron Philippe de Rothschild, and Dominus, a Cabernet Merlot from Christian Moueix of France's Château Pétrus and the John Daniels Society. The late-'80s vintages from these producers were deliberately made in a style best appreciated after long cellaring. Some connoisseurs put their money on Cabernets from Heitz Cellars Martha's Vineyard or Ridge Montebello Vineyards, but I remain skeptical much past the ten-year mark. Older California Cabs tend to dry out and become unbalanced.

Red Burgundies are also problematic, with few aging well beyond ten years, though the wines from Domaine Romanée-Conti—La Tâche, Romanée Conti—are still made in a traditional way that demands patience of those who would drink them. They also demand deep pockets, with mid-1980s vintages going for hundreds of dollars a bottle.

Bordeaux has had superb vintages in the past decade—'82, '85, '86, and probably '89—but only the Great Growths are completely safe choices for the next generation. All the First Growths—Lafite-Rothschild, Margaux, Latour, Haut-Brion, and Mouton-Rothschild—will grow in stature well into the twenty-first century, but I'm sure my sons will also be awed by the power of Second Growths like Pichon-Longueville and Cos d'Estournel, and, of course, the great Pomerol, Château Pétrus (although at more than $2,400 a case, you'd probably do better to put the money in the bank and pay off a semester of college).

The biggest, most tannic Italian reds from prestigious producers—Biondi-Santi's Brunello di Montalcino, Pio Cesare's Barolo, Angelo Gaja's Barbaresco (especially from the Sori San Lorenzo and Sori Tildin vineyards) and Antinori's Solaia (1985 to 1988) should be wonderful by the year 2000. One producer, Antonio Vallana, makes long-lived, richly tannic wines at astoundingly fair prices (the '83 Spanna is only about $9). His Spannas from the '60s are only now beginning to fade, so specimens from the '80s should improve for years to come.

Spain's red Riojas usually age well but are also inconsistent. There is, however, one truly magnificent Spanish red that's a foolproof choice—the extraordinary Vega Sicilia Unico (aged in oak for at least ten years before it's released)—a wine that has achieved near mythic status and whose available vintages are from the '60s and '70s and cost upwards of $100 a bottle. Imagine uncorking one of *those* to celebrate the birth of your first grandson.

The nice thing about vintage ports is that they're made only in good years and really shouldn't be drunk much before they're ten, making them ideal as a coming-of-age gift. Just buy from a reputable house like Sandeman, Calem, Croft's, Warre's, or Quinta do Noval, from vintages like '77, '80, and, particularly, the massive '85. The ports of Taylor-Fladgate are especially renowned for their aging potential, and the '85s are selling for less than $30 a bottle right now.

Incidentally, some of the best prognostication on wine longevity is to be found in Jancis Robinson's new *Vintage Timecharts: The Pedigree and Performance of Fine Wines to the Year 2000*, which I highly recommend.

If you bring your kid up right, he'll invite his old man over to dinner and share one of those bottles with you. See, I'm a big believer in the old proverb that says one barrel of wine can work more miracles than a church full of saints. ■



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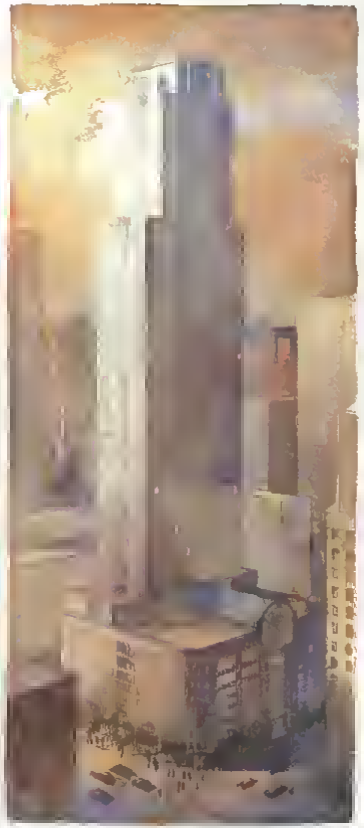
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HOUSE HUNTING

A High-Rise in the Heartland

By Paul Schneider



The Place: A modern, luxury high-rise apartment in the city that invented the modern, luxury high-rise apartment

The Architecture: The plan is simple: upscale retail on the first few floors, hotel or offices on the middle floors, fancy apartments the rest of the way up—up being as much as sixty or seventy floors. Outside, there is usually some attempt at a signature look, while inside, the apartments are furnished with the usual array of luxuries: Euro kitchenware, marble, and jetlike bathtub devices. Always in good taste, of course.

Historical Note: In all of Mies van der Rohe's Chicago apartments, the best view is from the master bedroom.

The Market: When the One Magnificent Mile Building opened seven years ago, priced at $300 a square foot, Realtors gulped. Today that figure represents a standard of sorts for the high-end market. Roughly translated: Apartments in the most visible condo tower now under construction—variously called Chicago Place, 700 North Michigan, and 100 East Huron—range from $200,000 for a one-bedroom, 1,026-square-foot ($194.93 per) apartment on the eleventh floor to a $1.4 million, 3,968-square-foot ($352.82 per) duplex on the forty-ninth floor.

Chicago is a pay-per-view place. A hypothetical $100,000 apartment with no view might run $120,000 with a partial water view, with full-on, due-east exposure to Lake Michigan, say $150,000. Expect a similar premium for a due-south look at the city skyline. And for a southeast-corner lot on a high floor, get ready to cough up 100-percent premiums. Since all the new luxury buildings are in the same Michigan Avenue/Streeterville/Mag Mile vicinity, location isn't as important a price factor as it is in other cities or for other types of property. Extra services—parking, doormen, health clubs—also vary little from building to building and don't significantly affect prices.

The Outlook: Developers point to last year's success of the 900 North Michigan Building—125 condos, ranging in price from $300,000 to $3 million, sold in only eighteen months—as a sign of good times to come. But by the time everybody points, the deer may be back in the woods. Specifically, 3,700 new units already under construction, and another twenty projects in the planning stages, may make 900 North's one-year prohibition on resale, intended to prevent speculation, somewhat unnecessary. Still, Chicago's real estate market is fairly robust, and values should hold.

The Pros: For a person in the fast lane, it's the address to drop over Johnnie Walker.

The Cons: Do you really want to be that person?

THE LISTING

Two bedrooms on thirty-first floor of Chicago Place. Full lake exposure in all rooms except kitchen. When completed early in '91, building will have health club, valet, concierge, and eight floors of shopping/dining. Twenty-five percent of the 204 units already under contract. Asking $567,000. Source: Eve Kronin, Century 21 Stanmeyer, Lincoln Park.

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The New Race Hustle

By Pete Hamill

THAT MORNING, my wife and I drove across the Brooklyn Bridge, listening to talk radio. We could have been in any of a hundred other cities in America because, on the radio, the Legion of the Invincibly Stupid was already hammering away at the remnants of our common civility. Whites slandered blacks and blacks returned their oratorical volleys, while the host fueled the ugly duel. As we plunged deeper into Brooklyn, news bulletins fed the talkers. The trials of two whites charged with killing a black youth in Bensonhurst moved toward verdicts, a black boycott of two Korean grocery stores continued into its fifth month, a Vietnamese man was in critical condition, his head broken by a black kid who called him a "Korean motherfucker" while beating him senseless with a claw hammer. Ah, the melting pot. O ye gorgeous mosaic.

We parked beside the second-oldest church in the city, its Dutch solidity and simple, combed lawns evoking a time long gone, and then walked a few blocks to the boycotted Korean store. My wife, Fukiko, was uneasy. She is a Japanese writer, if Vietnamese could be mistaken for Korean, so could Japanese. There have been signs that Asians are increasingly becoming targets of various forms of American resentment. In 1982 two Detroit autoworkers beat to death a Chinese American named Vincent Chin, thinking he was one of those terrible Japanese who had "ruined" the American auto industry. All through the '80s, other patriots burned crosses or tossed bombs at the homes of Vietnamese in Texas, Florida, and California. Cambodians have been attacked in Boston. Last year, in Stockton, California, a man walked into a school yard with a machine gun, murdered five children from Southeast Asia, and wounded many more. If you're Asian, it can get scary out there.



Why the Legion of the Invincibly Stupid is picking on Asians

But on this morning, there was more posturing and rhetoric than danger. About fifteen picketers were in the gutter outside the Red Apple grocery store. They were protesting because one of the Korean shopkeepers had quarreled with a fifty two-year-old Haitian woman over the price of some plantains and limes and then—the woman claimed—assaulted her. The picketers occasionally chanted slogans ("Koreans out! Shut 'em down!"), screamed at blacks who were breaking the boycott ("Traitor! Traitor!"), glowered for TV cameras, and refused to speak to reporters, including my wife. "They think all reporters are racists," said a black TV reporter. "Even me." The racism charge was amusing—in a ghastly way. The black picketers had spent weeks shouting slogans about chopsticks and fortune cookies at their Korean targets, they had called them "yellow monkeys", one of their major supporters was a race hustler named Sonny Carson, a convicted kidnapper who insisted last year that he wasn't anti-semitic, he was anti*white*. The Legion of the Invincibly Stupid is an equal-opportunity employer.

And yet none of this was surprising. Any student of American history knows that nativist and racist movements have been part of our social fabric since the mid-nineteenth-century heyday of the xenophobic Know-Nothing Party. And when "real" Americans didn't blame Catholics, Jews, Italians, Greeks, or Irishmen for their own inadequacies, they blamed Asians. First the Chinese, then the Japanese. I thought of all those old hurts, insults, and humiliations as my wife and I talked to the Koreans about their lives. They told stories as old as the immigrant tradition: how they arrived without language, full of hope, first laboring for others in the same immigrant group, finally buying their own businesses, starting families, working. And working. And working.

"I buy a bouk, with English word," a man named Kyung Ho Park said, after explaining that his average workday (before the boycott) was fifteen hours long. "No time for school."

When I was growing up, Italians, Eastern European Jews, and Greeks told

Pete Hamill *writes this column monthly for Esquire*

these stories. There were resentments then too, from the Legion of the Invincibly Stupid, ethnic quarrels even more brutal racism than now. But well into the 1950s, cities like New York were still manufacturing centers, and there were jobs for almost anybody who wanted to work, including people like my father, an immigrant with an eighth grade education. The city's traditional liberalism was made possible by an economy in which more than 30 percent of the jobs were in manufacturing; that figure has dropped to 10 percent, and the town's great generous liberal spirit is as frayed and tattered as an old coat.

One result: Immigrants like Kyung Ho Park are working in a city obsessed with fixing blame for its social and economic woes. New York is home to people of immense wealth, and they live well defended lives in the gaudy canyons of Manhattan. But in spite of the Reagan era economic boom, New York also contains 840,000 people who live on welfare, more than every man, woman, and child in San Francisco. They don't often see millionaires in their neighborhoods, they do see immigrants. And in the American tradition, the wrath of some is falling upon the newest arrivals, of whom the Koreans are the most visible. Sadly, the Asian immigrants frequently look upon those customers who are welfare clients with more contempt than pity.

"I work," one Korean said to me on Church Avenue. "They don't work. Why do I must feed them?"

That is to say, why must I pay taxes, why must I work long hours at a difficult job, while so many will not do what I do? For years, the children and grandchildren of older immigrants have sung the same bitter refrain. We made it, why don't *they*? Now you begin to hear it from the Koreans too. "You don't like my store," one angry Korean immigrant said to me, "then go to your own store. But they don't have store. Too hard. Too much work."

Such complaints can't be dismissed glibly as the latest examples of newcomers picking up the American racist virus. On the crudest level (down on the streets), they have a certain validity. In New York, as in other American urban centers, the Third World city within the larger city depends upon the taxes and energies of others for its food, clothing, housing, education, medical care, police, fire, and sanitation services. This year's budget for New York City is more than $27 *billion*, and some estimate that fully half of that immense sum is used for servicing the poor. It's inconceivable to think of this happening in Tokyo or Seoul or Singapore.

The persistence of the virtually permanent welfare-supported underclass is the most disgraceful measure of the decline of America's once all-powerful manufacturing plants. But most Americans don't want to talk anymore about root causes, they just see people sitting on the stoop while they go to work. Even the most orthodox liberals now understand that welfare degrades those who receive it and infuriates those who pay for it. So it is no surprise that some poor Americans mutter paranoid theories while others look for scapegoats. More and more these days, our favorite scapegoat is the Asian.

Cheap politicians blame Japan for the nation's economic decline; *they* work too hard, *they* save too much money, *they* close certain markets. Lee Iacocca growls in commercials that Americans make better cars than *they* do. Idiots like Donald Trump bellow, "The Japanese are ripping us off!" In movies like *Rambo*, Asians are mowed down by the hundreds while audiences cheer. And as usual in this country, what we are describing as a race problem is really one of class.

On Church Avenue in Brooklyn, you could feel the seething class bitterness of the black demonstrators. Earlier, they claimed that their anger wasn't simply about the incident that set off the protest. They told various auditors that Koreans—*all* Koreans!—were rude to blacks, suspecting them of shoplifting, acting curt with them, refusing to touch their hands when making change. "Fuckin' people don't know how to *treat* people," one exasperated black man said to me. "They act like every African American is a thief."

Even some Koreans will admit that this perception has some truth to it. A few will cite cultural differences as the heart of the matter (among Koreans, they say, smiling is discouraged, direct eye contact is considered aggressive, and women are taught not to touch strangers). Others blame bitter experience in underclass neighborhoods, which led them to make racial assumptions. A harder truth is that the success of the Koreans in New York is a form of humiliation for many African Americans. You can see a cartoon version of the relationship (*and* the problems with manners) in Spike Lee's sad movie, *Do the Right Thing*. I hear it on black talk radio and in conversations with black friends. With amazing speed, the Koreans have become Haves, while too many blacks, born here, speaking English, remain Have-Nots.

The Koreans only began coming to the United States in significant numbers after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act finally ended the racist restrictions against

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immigrants from Asia. Today more than two hundred thousand Koreans are believed to be living in New York, and they own 9,500 small businesses. The Korean greengrocer has become a widely admired (if stereotypical) figure in the city's life. And in spite of language problems and immense cultural differences, the newcomers have leapfrogged over the city's blacks on what used to be called the ladder of economic success.

"Don't try an' tell me that Koreans work harder than we do," a black man named Virgil Hills said to me a few blocks from the boycott site. "They just got advantages we don't have." Again, some truth here. Certainly, it's extremely difficult for American blacks to open their own grocery stores (or other retail businesses), because so many banks redline them, refusing to provide start-up loans. But the *real* advantages the Koreans have are not those talked about on the street. Back home, almost all of the Koreans were middle class, that is, urban, well educated, goal oriented, imbued with the Confucian ethic. In a 1987 essay on New York's Koreans, the sociologist Illsoo Kim cited one survey of 560 Korean householders in New York showing that 86 percent were married and living with spouses. Some 67 percent had finished college back home. Another study showed that 40 percent of Koreans who arrived in the mid-1970s had professional or technical backgrounds. American blacks with the same backgrounds have no need to open grocery stores, they have access to higher levels of American society.

But these educated Koreans—blocked from American corporate or professional life by the language barrier—have made great use of their abilities. In the greengrocer business, they have analyzed the American systems of purchase, distribution, and marketing, and made their own improvements. In addition, they get up early and stay late, usually the only formula for success. The Koreans have also expanded the sense of family beyond the essential base. In New York alone, there are twelve Korean banks, six daily newspapers in Korean, several cable channels with Korean programming, and at least three radio stations. There are almost three hundred Protestant churches in the Korean community and a burgeoning number of business groups and "prosperity associations." This network helps bind Koreans together, allowing them to learn from one another about the sometimes scary new world in which they are living. In a way, of course, this is another version of the old "self-help" philosophy that helped older immigrants become Americans. It had its failings, many immigrants were injured or exploited by their own kind. But that system worked a hell of a lot better than state welfare. Talk to Koreans, and they tell you they would rather starve than go on welfare; that would be a loss of face. They absolutely refuse to enter the dependency culture in which so many of the American poor find themselves trapped. Those blacks who sense a certain contempt from Koreans are probably reading the signals correctly. In the Korean grocery stores, *all* members of the family work, most often, the business itself was set up by the pooled savings of several family members. In underclass areas, where the Korean grocer is often paid with food stamps, the American family is in disarray or doesn't exist at all.

As it is to most working people everywhere, pride is important to the Koreans, it also shapes their reactions to trouble. Because they work so hard, they are understandably furious when kids steal from their stands. "I pay for what I eat," one Korean told me. "They don't want to pay. Just take." Since many of the stores are in ghetto or marginal areas, the kids are usually black, and that shapes the way some Koreans see *all* blacks. In a more perfect world, they would make finer distinctions, unfortunately, they live in this world. They are also frustrated by the lack of interest American police and courts have in such petty crimes. So they often deal with shoplifters themselves. In the past two years, I've witnessed three separate incidents of Korean grocers chasing kids through the streets. They didn't catch them, but when I asked for their reactions, they just shook their heads, full of contained fury. I saw the same look on the Koreans who were objects of the boycott, as they gazed out at the protesters and the TV cameras.

"I don't understand this kind of problem," Man Ho Park (brother of Kyung Ho) told my wife that day on Church Avenue. "So much anger. So much time doing nothing. Why not work? Why not use time for, for—improve life?"

Later, driving back slowly from the boycotted stores, we passed many other Korean groceries, wedged among the video shops and record stores and fast-food joints. Black women shopped. Children cried in strollers or gazed at the colorful displays of oranges and mangoes, bananas and grapes, yams and tomatoes. On the corners, knots of young black men talked, laughed, watched passing cars, sipped from beer cans. As we stopped for a light, one of them saw my wife looking out the window. He stared at her for a long moment. The light changed, and then slowly, almost as a matter of duty, he gave her the finger. ◻

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Here's to the Wieners!

By Mike Lupica

NOT LONG AGO, I turned on my television set and found this young tennis player telling the public how essential it is for him to wear pink at Grand Slam tournaments. His name escapes me, but I am sure you have seen him. He looks as if he sleeps in doorways and mugs Rockettes for clothing.

Anyway, there he was, looking somewhat like Nick Nolte in *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*, going on and on about how his life would change if he had to stop wearing pink.

"I'd still be the same player," he said, "I'd just be more boring." Then this tennis player said that he skips Wimbledon every year, in part because they have an all-white rule.

"I just hope people understand that I have to stand up for my rights," he said, somehow equating pink tennis clothes with Rosa Parks's bus.

That's when I did what I do a lot these days—I talked back to my television set. "Shut up," I said, and pointed my channel switcher at the screen as if it were Elvis's gun.

Is it just me, or are people in sports bothering us with this stuff more and more? They talk about money and contracts and other nonsense so often these days that I'm desperate enough to go looking for *A Current Affair*.

Sports personalities aren't supposed to annoy us. They're supposed to make us happy. We expect them to climb the wall and take away the home run. Or hit Jerry Rice on the numbers deep downfield. Or take off from the foul line and throw down a dunk.

Geraldo Rivera is supposed to annoy us. Or Michael Jackson. Or someone from Michael Jackson's family tree. Not guys from sports.

Unfortunately, it shakes out that way less and less. With ESPN and CNN and all-news cable sports networks, no thought in sports goes unspoken anymore. If you're not careful when you go looking for a ball game, you may find some punk tennis player talking about a pink revolution.



A very special tribute to the ten most annoying people in sports

So I have created a list: The Ten Most Annoying People in Sports for 1990. I know it is a very strong list because I have left off some heavy hitters. Pete Rose didn't make the cut, for example. Neither did Dick Vitale. Or Brent Musburger. Not even George Steinbrenner, who has turned into a loud nobody with a bad baseball team. Mike Ditka, the number-one whiner in sports last football season, couldn't get past Honorable Mention.

The honorees were selected for different reasons, but ultimately, there is one common thread among them. They all made me reach for my channel switcher faster than I would if I saw Morton Downey Jr.

1. George Will wrote a book about baseball this year called *Men at Work*. I just assume it shot to the top of the best-seller lists because every Rotisserie Baseball geek in America bought it.

Will made the sport out to be a combination of religion, laser surgery, and philosophy, a pastime truly appreciated only by prissy intellectuals like, well, George Will. When he was our shilling the book, you could not go a couple of nights without hearing his pitch: "Baseball is the only sport where the more you know, the better you appreciate it." The implication being, of course, that you really can't enjoy an afternoon at the ball park if you don't know how to pitch. Tony Gwynn when the count is two and one, the Padres have a man on second, the stadium has artificial turf, and Soviet troops have just landed in Azerbaijan.

2. The Atlanta Falcons' **Jerry Glanville** is

Mike Lupica *is a contributing editor of Esquire*

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very fond of his reputation as the NFL's renegade coach. Of course, it's easy to be a renegade in the fraternity of NFL coaches. Most of those guys are clinically dead.

Glanville dresses like Johnny Cash, tells tall stories about drag racing, and leaves tickets at the will-call window for James Dean and Elvis. Meanwhile, the only titles his Oilers teams ever won were awards for penalty yards and the reputation for being the worst thugs in the NFL.

Glanville is the Brian Bosworth of coaches—an act without a game to back it up. He almost makes me miss Tom Landry.

3. Eric Dickerson gained 11,226 yards in a seven-year career in the NFL. Other great runners have even said that he is immortal.

Here is what I say about Dickerson. He dropped the football every time he ran anywhere near a big moment in a game.

He cried his way out of Los Angeles so he could get more money in Indianapolis. Then he started crying about the grave danger of running behind the Colts' offensive line. Forget about oil spills. Forget about acid rain or the ozone layer. Dickerson acted as if the number-one issue in 1990 was the quality of his life.

You get the idea that he would only be truly happy playing touch football in Hugh Hefner's front yard.

4. When he is healthy, **Jose Canseco** is the most exciting player in baseball. Bo Jackson? Put him up against Canseco and he seems tiny enough to fit on top of a wedding cake next to the words BO KNOWS ICING. Canseco has a chance to be one of the great players of all time if he can keep his head from floating away from his body.

But let's face it, Jose doesn't believe in overdoing it in the thinking department. He rides around with a gun in his car, driving as if he owns the pole position at Indy. Two months before Oakland made him the highest-paid player in baseball history, he complained that his multimillion-dollar salary just didn't cut it, and he cried racism. When the A's came through with the $23 million, they were more progressive than Jesse Jackson.

My favorite moment with Canseco this season came during an interview with NBC's Bob Costas. Costas had mentioned that Jose often rubbed people the wrong way. Canseco then explained how honest he is, how candid. If you want straight talk, come to Jose Canseco, he said.

"Are you the best player in baseball?" Costas asked him next.

"I don't know," Canseco said.

5. Alonzo Mourning is the perfect Georgetown basketball player for **John Thompson.** The two of them belong on this list as one entry. Mourning goes through the entire college basketball season with his sassy mouth open and his elbows up in the air, looking for a fight. Thompson, who some people think of as Mr. Chips, has always coached precisely this brand of ball.

It's easy to see why Mourning might have a bit of an attitude as he goes into his junior season. Georgetown can't seem to win the big game anymore. And when Georgetown loses to a powerhouse like Xavier in the second round of the NCAA tournament, Thompson's defenders start saying that Mourning and his teammates really aren't that good.

Mourning also seems to be shrinking before our eyes. When he came out of high school, as I recall, everyone talked about the amazing seven-footer. After his freshman year, when Georgetown didn't make the Final Four, he was down to six ten. Then UConn won the Big East and the Hoyas lost to Xavier. Now Mourning's probably six nine.

By the time he gets his diploma, the kid's going to be as tall as Michael J. Fox.

6. Sugar Ray Leonard could make this list just for being the single worst color commentator in sports television. No kidding. He makes guys like Dick Butkus and O. J. Simpson seem as smooth as Peter Jennings.

But there's more.

Leonard the boxer will not go away. He retires. He comes back. He retires. He comes back. He is a spotlight junkie, but he doesn't ever say that. He wants us to think that every comeback fight—against a Hagler or a Hearns or a Duran—is some kind of moral imperative. Somehow, the boxing public—which makes Canseco seem a deep thinker in comparison—goes for every challenge, and Leonard walks away with another $20 million. In return, the public gets to see Ray Leonard throwing punches as if underwater. If you watched the last Leonard-Duran match, you know what I mean. The two of them could have been an exhibit at the Museum of Natural History.

I would basically like to see Leonard have one more big fight—against George Will, say—and then hit the road.

7. Jerry Tarkanian finally won the college basketball national championship in 1990. That is all it took for television commentators and sportswriters to roll over and let Tark the Shark scratch their bellies. People who were clamoring for Jim Valvano to be shot out of a cannon for everything that was happening at North Carolina State forgave Tarkanian because Nevada–Las Vegas was winning. With each victory in the NCAA tournament, he got closer to becoming Father Flanagan of *Boys' Town.*

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It makes you wonder if Valvano would have run for governor instead of resigning from North Carolina State, had he won *his* national championship in 1989.

Tarkanian's genius at Vegas, a much bigger genius than the one he has for coaching basketball, is that he managed to stay a step ahead of the NCAA until he won the title. After all these years, the NCAA's investigators have never managed to pin anything on him.

Here is all you have to know about Tarkanian's program at Vegas: It courted Lloyd Daniels.

Daniels, known as Sweet Pea, is a New York basketball legend—and a bit of an academic legend. "I ain't allergic to no school," he once said. "I just don't like to go." But go he did—to four high schools in three states. Somehow he was accepted at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, California, even though he read at a third-grade level. After one semester, he enrolled at UNLV. He might have been around for last spring's national championship if he hadn't been arrested for attempting to buy cocaine before Tark turned him loose in the gym.

8. Don King is probably the most powerful figure in the sport of boxing. He seems to have contracts with every heavyweight but Sylvester Stallone, he has a ward named Mike Tyson, and when he tells the big boys from Tyson's personal network—Home Box Office—to jump, they will gladly jump—all the way over King's hair.

Don King is beyond annoying. He might be the worst bum in all of sports. Some boxing writers still try to pass him off as a character. Forget it. He flourishes in boxing because it is a sport without laws.

The best sight of the year was Don King keening to boxing officials and the world when Buster Douglas laid Tyson out. While everyone else watched Tyson groping around for his mouthpiece in Japan, I saw King doing the same thing.

9. Bob Arum spent years saying much worse things about King than I ever did.

Theirs was the ugliest feud in sports. Donald Trump and Merv Griffin? Compared with King and Arum, they were fraternity brothers.

When Buster Douglas decided to go with Steve Wynn and the Mirage Hotel for his first title defense, Arum immediately jumped into bed with King to copromote Tyson versus Henry Tillman and George Foreman versus Adilson Rodrigues.

Someday I want to see Bob Arum and Don King copromoting umbrella sales on New York City street corners when it looks like rain.

10. Andre Agassi.

There. I remembered his name. ◘

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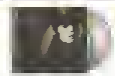
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Wall Street, Texas, U.S.A.

By Joseph Nocera

I LIVED IN TEXAS at the tail end of the oil boom of the early 1980s, I got there just in time to watch the great boom turn into the great bust. I met oilmen who had once thrown money around with abandon—renting helicopters to fly to, say, lunch—and who were now in Chapter 11, watched dentists who had quit their practices return sheepishly to drilling teeth instead of wells, walked through gleaming new corporate headquarters, filled with the handsome furniture that had become every geologist's due, except that there weren't any geologists. They'd all been laid off.

The price of oil was about $14 a barrel when the oil boom began. When the boom was officially over—around the middle of 1983, I'd say—the price stood at $32 a barrel. Strange, eh? The price of oil more than doubles, and the industry begins its long, brutal descent. But it wasn't so strange. What crippled the oil industry in 1983 was not price (that would come later) but psychology. Almost everyone had forgotten the basics—that commodities go down as well as up, that costs matter, that cycles are an essential part of any business. Wells were drilled on the basis of the irrational belief that the price of oil would spiral ever upward, to $50 or $70 or even $100 a barrel. When it turned out that oil couldn't push much past $40 a barrel, the bubble burst, as it had to.

These days, I spend a lot of time on Wall Street, and it's startling to me how much it resembles the Texas of the early and mid-1980s. By any objective measure, the brokerage and investment-banking industry ought to be in better shape now than when the bull market started in August 1982. With its new businesses (like mergers and acquisitions), with trading volume even on slow days double what it was eight years ago, with the Dow Jones average two thousand points higher, the industry has grown geometrically.



The bankers forgot the lesson of the oil bust: It's a business

Yet Wall Street is a disaster. Drexel gone, Merrill Lynch laying off thousands of workers, Shearson Lehman Hutton announcing a $925-million *quarterly* loss.

And it's happened in large part because Wall Street got lost in the deadly fog of delusion. Given the always harsh realities of the market, how could Wall Street's executives have allowed themselves to get so sloppy, to expand so wildly, to forget the fundamentals? How could they have acted so much like Texas oilmen? But that's what they did.

There's one other thing I remember about the Texas oil boom, though. I remember the tiny coterie of people who kept their heads about them, who never got caught up in the mass euphoria. There is someone like that on Wall Street too, I've noticed. His name is Sandy Weill.

The "return" of Sandy Weill—to Wall Street, which he left in 1985 after building Shearson into the nation's second-largest brokerage before selling it to American Express, to the shrewd deal making for which he is justly famous, to the cover of *Business Week* and the front page of *The New York Times*—is many things, but what it is above all else is a morality tale. That's what has made it so irresistible. A few months ago, when word leaked out that Weill was negotiating with American Express to buy back his old firm, the story was given astonishing play. The coverage had an upbeat tone that seemed to signal the press's approval—at last—of the kind of boring, old-fashioned values that Weill favored: sanity over delusion, conservatism over excess. (The negotiations were ultimately fruitless.)

"People were building the business based on those $20-million and $30-million fees," Weill says with obvious distaste, rolling an ever-present cigar around in his hand, "and not on the things that will make a steady $2-million and $3-million profit." Nowadays, lots of people on Wall Street say things like this, starting with Felix Rohatyn. The difference is that Rohatyn is Wall

Joseph Nocera *is a contributing editor of Esquire*

DAVID COWLES

Street's greatest hypocrite, having gotten rich on the very investment-banking practices he now glibly condemns. Weill, on the other hand, has always practiced what he preached.

He is fifty-seven years old now, and has spent most of his adult life on Wall Street, and to be plain about it, his personality has more than a little in common with his business ethos. He seems nice enough, but hardly what you'd call charismatic. In this most glamorous of industries, he is decidedly unglamorous. He speaks in short, to-the-point sentences, all the while fidgeting with a bracelet he wears. You get the sense that although he is happy to oblige, he's got other things he would rather be doing. Like running the business, for instance.

For that's what Wall Street is. It's not a collection of deal-making samurai, or a gathering place for millionaire twenty-seven-year-olds. It's just a *business*—and a hard and gritty business at that. That was always Weill's fundamental insight. He let others get carried away with the glamour, and then when they stumbled (as they invariably did), he would swoop in. That's how Weill had built a once-tiny investment operation into the second-largest firm on Wall Street.

And that's how he's doing it this time too. Now his base of operations is a company called Primerica, which he bought from Gerald Tsai in December 1988, and of which the most visible subsidiary is the old-line investment firm of Smith Barney, Harris Upham & Co. Back in 1987, when Tsai, carried away by the glamour, first bought Smith Barney for Primerica, it wound up losing $93 million. The next year it lost $53 million. Then along came Sandy Weill to the rescue and—presto!—Smith Barney made $63 million in 1989. It seems so effortless the way he does it, magical even. But the truth is just the opposite. The greatest rebuke to Wall Street's eight-year orgy stems not from the fact that Weill's solutions are so magical, but that they are so pathetically mundane.

"Not long before we bought Primerica, they had a big meeting," Weill recalls. "They had entertainers on the schedule. They had sports figures. They had all kinds of people. But they didn't have any slot for *me* to speak." He smiles ruefully. "So my wife and I set up in a suite and put the word out that we'd be there for anybody who wanted to talk to us."

Weill was deluged with visitors. Out of these meetings he gained his first bits of knowledge about the nuts and bolts of the operation he was about to take over—what division existed more because of ego than profit potential, for instance, or what fancy piece of real estate was unnecessary. This is the kind of unglamorous knowledge Weill has always thrived on.

And so he went about his business. No magic. No secrets. None of that Tom Wolfe Master of the Universe stuff. Smith Barney needed a focus, he gave it one—aimed at "high-net-worth individuals" (as they say euphemistically in the business). He visited all the offices, laying out his plans and getting the staff on his side. He cut costs—$50 million before he was done. He avoided what was "hot." "I'm fiscally conservative," he says unapologetically. "We try not to fall for whatever is the latest fad. We could have bought junk bonds, but we were nervous about them. So we only bought government bonds."

I can see the patronizing smiles now from Wall Street's "Big Swinging Dicks," to use the phrase immortalized by Michael Lewis in his best seller, *Liar's Poker*. In their view, Weill's "flaw" has always been his aversion to the kind of bet-the-house risk for which Wall Street is supposed to be famous. From where Weill's sitting, however, the flaw is theirs, not his. He is a businessman, and a businessman is supposed to manage risk, not tempt it. Thus, when Merrill Lynch got into the mortgage-backed-securities business a few years ago without having anyone in the place who truly understood it, the company wound up losing $377 million in a single series of trades. A major disaster. Weill, on the other hand, put Smith Barney back into the arbitrage business, in spite of the risks. The difference is that there were limits and controls, with top management involved in daily decisions; when the United Airlines deal collapsed, Smith Barney lost only $400,000.

"Let me give you another example," says Frank Zarb, who is running Smith Barney for Weill. (You may remember Zarb as Gerald Ford's "energy czar," but he's an old Weill hand from way back, having been the head of operations at the old Shearson.) "When we got in here, they had a fixed-income-trading operation in London that was losing about $3 million a year. We said, 'Why do you have this?' They said, 'We need to have that presence if we're going to be a world player.'" Zarb shakes his head and frowns. "That's such *bullshit*." The operation was shut down.

"What happens," continues Zarb, "is that people make wrong decisions because one part of the business is doing so well. They let the part that's doing well dominate everything else. So maybe they'll ignore retail. Or they'll tolerate offices with 50 percent empty seats. Or they'll allow other departments to run uneconomically on the grounds that they're 'supporting' the big money-maker. Which is also bullshit."

"We increased revenues by $65 million last year," says Zarb, "and that's not including the Drexel people."

Ah yes, the Drexel people. That was another one of those deals Weill is so famous for—swooping in to take advantage of the mistakes of others. Was there any firm that better exemplified the excesses of the age, the primacy of the one-shot fee, the delusions of eternal prosperity than did Drexel? Surely not. And so when Drexel was beginning its long fade into the sunset, it was only appropriate that it sold sixteen retail offices to Sandy Weill. Just another chapter in the ongoing morality tale.

The return of Sandy Weill is above all else a morality tale. That's what has made it so irresistible.

You would think that a culture clash would have ensued: the cost-conscious, risk-averse Weill on the one hand, and the wild, free-spending Drexel brokers on the other. And there was some of that. "They keep track of the pencils around here," one Drexel-turned-Smith-Barney man grumbles. Mostly, though, the merger was surprisingly uneventful. In his visits to the former Drexel offices, Zarb is supposed to have boasted, "We paid five million for a business that's made twenty million in six months."

Toward the end of our conversation, I ask Weill to sum up his management philosophy. "Run it as a business," he says. "Have a vision of what you're trying to accomplish. Make sure everybody buys into that vision. Return internal phone calls before you return external phone calls. Keep costs under control in the good times and you'll be able to ride out the bad times. Don't expand for the sake of expansion." Then he stops. He rolls his cigar, waiting for me to respond.

I wasn't sure what to say. "It sounds so...so *obvious*," I reply at last.

"Yeah," Weill says with a laugh, "it is. But how many people do you hear saying it?" ◻



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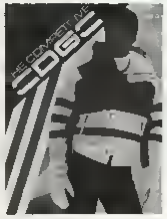
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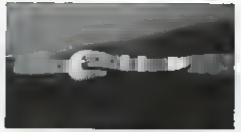
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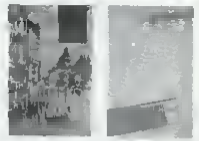
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How Often In The History
Of Music Do We Find Something
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Sleep Walking

By John Poppy



Insomnia is more than a nuisance. It makes life a dangerous blur

SUDDENLY I'M AWAKE, roused not by a dream or a noise but by just not being asleep any more. I reach for the watch on the bedside table, making a little bet on what I'll see when I press the LIGHT button. 3:14 A.M.

It isn't the waking up I mind so much, or even lying alert in the dark for an hour or two. George Sheehan, the doctor runner-writer whose life is an epic quest for personal bests, told me once, "It's perfect. I start writing a column, or a talk, or get on with my search for the world's greatest first sentence." But George is a philosopher with a good memory. If I'm going to think, I want the lights on and a pencil and pad in hand.

What bothers me more is the prospect that, come dawn, even if I haven't opened my eyes during the night, I'll get up tired. I didn't wake up tired when I was younger. Maybe I would if I were twenty or thirty now. Sleep researchers estimate that half the teenagers and adults in America—at least a hundred million—are struggling to perform with bodies and minds handicapped by lack of sleep. We're not talking here about people with medical disorders—apnea that stops a sleeper's breathing, narcolepsy, chronic insomnia. We're talking about people whose work schedules and personal preferences force them to tough out a life on less sleep than their bodies want.

If *tired* meant only a quick snooze in a meeting, that might be no big deal. But fatigue from sleep loss means more.

It can make you act drunk, without a trace of alcohol in your blood. Not in every way. Alcohol impairs judgment, alters inhibition, and affects personality in ways that simple sleep loss doesn't. But in a critical area—alertness—many of the weary hundred million suffer lapses of attention and information-processing ability, while they're driving, caring for children, or otherwise affecting someone else's welfare, exactly as if they'd been drinking.

Everyone knows sleep deprivation damages alertness, that's what *sleepy* means. Few, however, know the power of its double whammy. If you do take a drink, sleep loss multiplies its effects.

"For a hard worker sleeping five hours a night, one beer might have the same effect as three or four Scotches for someone who sleeps nine hours a night," says Dr. Thomas Roth, whose experiments include feeding vodka and tonic at 9:00 in the morning to volunteers who have either slept plenty or not enough. Roth heads the Sleep Disorders and Medicine Division at Henry Ford Hospital, in Detroit, where researchers put volunteers—sleepy, rested, drunk, and sober (some get placebo drinks, tonic with only a few drops of vodka for odor)—through a battery of tests. The results show that sleep loss and alcohol not only produce similar sedative effects (both make you sleepy) but also interact. Each heightens the effects of the other.

My college days are far behind me. I aim for seven or eight hours a night in bed. I never even think of booze before late afternoon. And I consider it unjust to feel as if I've been up all night when I haven't.

To trace where the youthful zest went, and what might bring it back, I called Richard Coleman, a psychologist who specializes in chronobiology, the study of the "biological clock." A former codirector of the Stanford University Sleep Disorders Clinic, he heads a consulting firm, Coleman & Associates, in Ross, California, which advises some of the world's largest corporations on ways to improve performance and reduce the accident rates caused by mismatches between job hours and people's internal clocks.

"People naturally develop more sleep disorders as they get older," Dr. Coleman said, "just as they get more heart disease and so forth. Two reasons interlock, as usual: environment and physiology; nurture and nature."

Environment starts with the amount of sleep time you give yourself. Some people sacrifice—often with pride—

John Poppy *writes this column monthly for Esquire.*

BILL SANDERSON

one, two, or more hours of sleep every night to work and play schedules. Many may rate themselves "alert" when a casual observer can tell they aren't.

There is a way to score how alert or sleepy they are: the Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT), developed by researchers at Stanford in the 1970s. The MSLT simply shows how prone you are to napping. At two-hour intervals, from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., you lie down on a comfortable bed in a dark, quiet room, and a researcher records the number of minutes you take to doze off. (Changes in brain waves, transmitted through electrodes on the scalp and face, mark precisely when it happens.) If you're still awake after twenty minutes, the test ends and your score is twenty, meaning fully alert. If you fall asleep in, say, three minutes, your "sleep latency" score is three—pretty sluggish.

"Ten- to twelve-year-olds score the best," Coleman said. "They're very alert and zestful. One reason is that normally they have one long, regular sleep period every day, seven days a week."

By college age, people rest considerably sleepier during the day. They've started using caffeine, alcohol, and other stimulants and depressants, they eat and exercise less regularly than a ten-year-old, they watch late-night television and deal with bed partners, they use weekends to catch up on sleep. The more fitful the behavior, the more it disrupts the body's rhythms.

Physiology makes an even greater difference between a ten-year-old's alertness and a thirty-year old's. As we reach our twenties, thirties, and beyond, we have decreasing amounts of Stage 4 (deep) sleep. This most profound phase of sleep seems to have restorative value. It occupies about a quarter of a child's sleep time, but only an eighth or less of an adult's.

Also, Coleman said, "We seem to lose some flexibility in our circadian rhythms, just as we lose it in muscles and joints, we don't adjust as easily to changes." Body temperature, hormone levels, and other markers rise and fall in round-the-day—circadian—rhythms. (The human biological clock runs on a twenty-five-hour cycle, but we use external cues, such as jobs and daylight, to synchronize it to a twenty-four hour day.) Temperature, for instance, is lowest when you're sleepiest, highest when you're most alert. Rapid travel across time zones, changes in periods of light and dark, and other outside influences upset and reset the rhythms.

For more on the connections between age and sleep, Coleman suggested I talk with Mary Carskadon, who helped develop the MSLT when she was at Stanford. Now a professor at E. P. Bradley Hospital at Brown University, Dr. Carskadon also serves on the National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research.

It's true, she said, a normal person gets less restorative sleep as he or she grows older. "The ability to consolidate sleep—to have a long period of sleep without arousal—seems to lessen with age. *Arousal* means coming up from sleep—a change in brain waves that means technically you're no longer asleep. It may be so short you don't realize you're awake—four or five seconds. As people age, we see more and more of what you might call microarousals."

Besides sleeping less, we sleep worse. Carskadon's studies of adolescents confirm that between the ages of ten and twenty, we lose 40 to 50 percent of the Stage 4 sleep we had at ten. "The rate of decline lessens after age twenty," she said, "but the process continues through the rest of life."

It's all probably a normal side effect of the way in which the brain matures. One theory, suggested by Dr. Irwin Feinberg at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Martinez, California, is that the decline in Stage 4 sleep reflects a thinning out of synapses—contact points between neurons—in the cerebral cortex.

"When you're born," Carskadon explained, "your brain is still growing and its neurons are still developing." In fact, newborns don't have Stage 4 sleep. It develops as the synaptic tree grows during the first year of life. Stage 4 sleep reaches its peak in early toddlers. In adolescence, Feinberg proposes, the synaptic thinning starts. He suggests that if it *doesn't* occur, abnormalities can arise—maybe even some schizophrenia—because "too many messages flood the brain."

Physiology and environment may not come under your control, but your response to them certainly does—and our responses alarm many sleep researchers. "The group I run with feels that most Americans get too little sleep—by choice," Carskadon said. One of her friends recently remarked, "The other doctors keep nodding off during medical rounds at the hospital. When I'm the only one awake, am I the abnormal one?"

"It's not normal to fall asleep when you're supposed to be awake," said Carskadon. "People think it is because so many do it."

Considering the number who add drinking to sleepiness, she added, not enough of us know about the interactions. For that, I needed to talk with Tom Roth in Detroit.

Dr. Roth doesn't know anyone who has studied dose equivalents—how many beers equals losing one hour of sleep, two hours, and so forth. But he has no doubt about the results of the attention tests he gives his volunteers.

"People who've had plenty of sleep do very well. People who've had only five or six hours of sleep are impaired, no question. People who drink minimal amounts of alcohol are impaired. And people who have had five or six hours of sleep *and* drink alcohol are superimpaired."

What alarms Roth "is not the level of sleep loss in this society, which is real. It's the ignorance of the consequences. People know that eating a lot of fats makes them vulnerable to heart disease. But they think the less they sleep, the better they are.

"You have to recognize that if you're studying for exams or making deadlines and quotas, and then you have a drink to celebrate, you're in double trouble. A trivial second drink after meeting a deadline is really dangerous.

"It's not just that people are sleep deprived, it's that they don't know the rudiments of sleep hygiene."

Those rudiments include accepting the changes that come with living—most of us over ten have insomnia about one to ten times a year.

Also: Have a regular bedtime; the human body resists change. Don't take daytime naps. Exercise regularly. Avoid strenuous workouts, heavy meals, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol for at least three hours before bedtime. Alcohol might sedate you, but it can disrupt sleep patterns and often creates a sleepless rebound later in the night. Sleeping pills are only for the infrequent emergency. They, too, disrupt normal patterns and can be addictive.

One bit of advice has changed. Some sleep therapists used to say that if you can't go back to sleep in the middle of the night, you might as well get up and do household chores. No more. Researchers at Harvard reported last year that they exposed fourteen men to five hours of bright light when their body temperatures were lowest (that is, when they were sleepiest). After just three exposures, the biological clocks of all fourteen reset to a new cycle of "daytime," regardless of the actual time. So turning on a light when you can't sleep might make your problem worse, convincing your system that 3:14 A.M. is dawn.

So I get up and go about my day—giving more attention now to tasks like driving than I did before I heard Tom Roth say, "Getting enough sleep is one thing. Knowing when you're impaired is another. You've got to know when to be careful, and not try to tough it out."



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The Curve

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when other connections—neighborhood, family—are breaking down. We ask each other, *Who killed Laura Palmer? Who killed Laura Palmer?* We ask you, you ask us. Questions like this make up a tribe. Sort of.

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Culture comes with its own agenda. Tipper. Helms. Wildmon. 2 Live Crew. Lines form.



ZEITGEIST

POP GOES THE PROLETARIAT

By Louis Menand

Among the images Andy Warhol reproduced in his silk-screen factory—along with the soup cans and the Marilyns and the electric chairs—was the image of the hammer and sickle. The Museum of Modern Art has thoughtfully included an example of the "Hammer and Sickle" series in the *Prints of Andy Warhol* exhibition it is sending on a tour of Eastern Europe. The show opens September 24 in Prague, then travels to East Germany, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, and finishes up next summer in Warsaw. It will be interesting to learn how Eastern Europeans take the joke.



Will Eastern Europe get the joke?

The joke is so familiar in the West that scarcely anyone resists it anymore. Warhol wasn't the first artist to recognize the aesthetic potential of commercial culture, but he was the first to see that the way to exploit it was to get all that abstract expressionist highbrow angst out of the way. Warhol's Brillo box didn't say, "Gone is the age of heroic art. Now my soul must seek its image in a Brillo box." It didn't even say, "Just a Brillo box, perhaps, but how interesting the compositional play of figure and ground!" It just said, "Hey. These Brillo boxes are neat."

Along with the other pioneers of postwar sensibility, Warhol helped teach a whole generation how to live happily in the culture of abundance. Here was this inexhaustibly proliferating image-world of *things*: billboards, commercials, movie stars, TV shows, supermarkets selling ten kinds of hot dogs, fifty kinds of potato chips, a hundred kinds of soft drinks—all screaming, "Buy me! Love me! Give up your grim and poorly packaged little individuality and become just like me!" How was Mind to defend itself against this assault?

Warhol's answer was: Give up. Stop trying to make distinctions of value and you'll defuse the power of commercial culture to manipulate you. If you treat everything as an image, nothing can persuade you that it's anything more than an image. Lower the temperature everywhere and you can't get burned anywhere. The face of Marilyn Monroe is an endlessly simulated icon, and gee, so is the face of Mao.

But who in Eastern Europe has had more than a distant view of the culture of abundance? If it's hard to imagine what Eastern Europeans will make of a pop-art hammer and sickle, it's almost as hard to imagine what they'll make of a canvas of Campbell's soup cans. In Eastern Europe, none of those images is cool enough yet to touch.

The whole matter of what Western culture can give the East, and what Eastern culture should want from the West, is probably not worth getting too reflective about for the simple reason that it's already too late. Last fall, Hungary went noncommunist on, let's say, a Tuesday. On Wednesday a full-page ad in *The New York Times* announced that Hungarians were about to enjoy one of the finest fruits of the open society, a Hungarian edition of *Playboy*.

And as the Warhol exhibition suggests, not only is every consumer good of capitalist culture ready to ship, the whole array of techniques for managing that culture is also on the way. Want to learn how free elections work? We'll send you our spin doctors! Want to get your potatoes into every kitchen in Bulgaria? We've got marketing wizards! (And have you thought about tasty Glas nosh potato puffs?) Some parts of Eastern Europe, in short, are likely to get postmodernized before they have a chance to become modernized.

Liberal democracy is about the freedom to choose, and if people choose to read *Playboy*—or the Hungarian edition of the *Enquirer*—and pass up the latest *New York Review of Books*, we can only feel the satisfaction of knowing that both journals were on the newsstand. In its purest form, though—when the whole society has turned into a trackless mall of consumer goods—free choice is an abyss. That's an aspect of our culture Warhol captured (and also, I suppose, embodied). Maybe the exhibition of his prints in Eastern Europe will induce a little vertigo. We in the West have been dizzy for a long time. ■

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An ongoing examination of how an underappreciated decade transformed the world as we know it

BURNS, BABY, BURNS

A Mormon friend of mine swears nothing of value came out of the 1970s. But then, a Mormon would have to think that. If the 1960s put the forbidden pleasures of recreational hallucination, nonprocreative sex, and uninhibited hair cultivation on the map, it was the 1970s that democratized them as far as the Great Salt Lake. By then, even Donny and Marie sported the crotch-tugging, petroleum-based garments of the social revolution. Even Jimmy Carter flared his chops.

To the joyless 1980s, the tonsorial extravagances of the 1970s seemed a bizarre and unremunerative aesthetic jag. Naked temples, symbols of greed, were de rigueur on Wall Street. But look around in the 1990s. Sideburns, emblems of outré hedonism, are proliferating like smiley-face stickers. Even heterosexuals are bringing their whiskers down: it's a tribute to a decade we've only just begun to appreciate. —Jacob Weisberg



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SELLING

HOW DOW RECYCLES REALITY

By Mark Crispin Miller

"That's my Dad." In the preteen voice-over there's just the trace of an apologetic chuckle. It's understandable. This "Dad" is an overt dork. Pitching at a (Dow) company softball game, he gives up a base hit, then tries to block it with his foot. Note the look of nitwit concentration, recalling Dagwood Bumstead or Curly Howard hard at work. Dad, too, is a diverting stooge, with that potent Dow logo stamped across his cap, and his togs steeped in the brilliant white and orange of that logo. (In fact, the whole bright ball field is decked out in the same festive colors.)

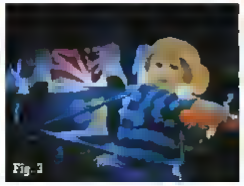

Fig. 1

"Good thing he's got a *real* job!" jokes Dad's young son, "—at Dow!" As the subject shifts from softball to the corporation, this cherub drops the mild, ironic tone and starts promoting Dow's environmentalism in a kind of earnest kidspeak. Dad is (spoken haltingly) "a—plastics. recycling engineer!" Dad "figures out ways" to turn plastic trash "into neat stuff like those picnic tables—and Brad's bat 'n' ball!"

With this last phrase, there appears tiny "Brad," apparently a baby brother, whacking a home run—and then there's Dad again, oafishly striking out. "My Dad may be a lousy ballplayer," his son concludes, "but he's a *neat guy!*" The boy then grasps Dad's hand and gazes up, with filial pathos, into the engineer's weak, boyish face, sighing, "I'm *real proud* o' ya, Dad!" "*Proud* of me?" Dad gasps, and the camera cranes up and back to reveal the father-son communion amid the Dow-sponsored gaiety, as that hearty female voice, so reminiscent of "the Sixties" (the Seekers), breaks, as usual, into "Dow—*lets* you do *great things!*"

What Dow is really selling here is not just a profitable myth about plastics.


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

Devised for Earth Day, this ad, like most "Green ads," tries to dim our awareness of foul air, mounting garbage, ozone depletion. Implicitly, Dow's sponsorship of this old-fashioned sunny fete assures us that Dow, prolific maker of (among other goodies) Styrofoam, pesticide, and chemical fertilizer, wants us all to live as we did before the rise of agribusiness, freeways, and fast food. The child, too, is reassuring. If this cool young Aryan is so moved by Dad's daily responsibilities, then Dad/Dow must be doing a heroic job indeed, with that "plastics recycling."

Not that plastic poses any danger! Certainly, each and every one of us should go on using tons of it. Dad is there to help Dow make *more* plastics. And why not? Isn't plastic just as wholesome as whatever grows on trees? Note, among the items displayed on the child's left (fig. 2), that large green apple, placed there as if to blur the crucial difference between nature's bounty and the corporation's goods.

And Dow's TV spots work to sanitize not just its wares but its very image. In this ad Dow seems not huge and lethal, but goofily benign, like that awkward boy/dad in his special hat and corporate colors. By softening "Dad," our usual symbol of authority, Dow appears also to champion the weak and innocent. "Brad" belts a homer while Dad strikes out—just as, in other Dow ads, the effectual one is not some steel-gray CEO, but a slightly rumpled backpacker, a lanky college student grinning on a humble bike, a slim and saintly Ph.D. gone home to save her Grandpa's farm. Dow projects itself as "caring"—yet its power seems all-pervasive. Note, in the final shot, that white-and-orange umbrella, placed protectively above the faulty employee and his adoring son.


Fig. 4


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

What Dow is selling here, then, is not just a profitable myth about plastics but the sense (which will become *our* sense, if we don't watch out) that certain dissident impulses of the past have been absorbed—by Dow. In its ads, the young are on Dow's side—not like, say, twenty years ago. Back then, one of Dow's products—napalm—made the company notorious, through horrifying images of children burned and screaming. Those who saw, and haven't forgotten, may not feel comforted by Dow's knowing hikers, tykes, and Ph.D.'s. Younger viewers, on the other hand, have no way of spotting the lie, since TV, thanks to Dow and others, has no memory. ■



A good leather coat should have two arms and fifty feet.

In this world, there are many things that can be mass-produced.

But not a coat like this.

Not a coat that requires over fifty feet of the finest calfskin available anywhere on earth. Calfskin so perfect it can be tanned as is with vegetable oils.

Never painted or color corrected.

Not a coat whose every square inch has undergone the most expensive, most effective waterproofing known to man. A process in which we flood the leather with a special waterproof compound while it is being tanned in the drum, not afterwards.

This is the only technique that insures total penetration of the waterproofing agent. The only technique good enough for a garment that bears our name.

Not a coat whose comfort seems to increase the more you put it under the stress of active use. Because of the extra feet of calfskin, the extra hours of tailoring we spend opening up the back and shoulder dimensions. Adding features such as two-piece underarm gussets to maximize your freedom of movement.

And certainly not a coat whose detailing is so meticulous that every zipper is milled and tumbled smooth so as to not injure the leather, every button is genuine horn or brass, and every buttonhole is both calfskin bound and clean-finished with stitching inside and out.

In leather coats that lack this latter feature, shreds of lining will begin to emerge in a matter of months. But Timberland designers do not think in terms of months. They take a longer view of product longevity. Setting their sights on a decade or two. Or more.



There is a method to our madness, and it is perfectly clear. We will do anything for the extra comfort and confidence of our customers.

Confidence, for example, that getting caught in a sudden downpour won't spoil your day or your valuable calfskin investment. Confidence that on the night your buddy spills a beer on your sleeve, you'll need to do nothing more than find a little water and a sponge.

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BENSON & HEDGES



MOVIES

HAS DAVID LYNCH PEAKED?

By Philip Lopate

David Lynch has become a fashion phenomenon, the man of the hour, one of those litmus-test artists whom the cult adores while skeptics wonder what the fuss is about. While all of his films *look* great, with enough visual panache to supply a dozen directors, they're also juvenile at times, repetitious and emotionally unresolved. (The exception is *The Elephant Man*, his most controlled and affecting film, which Lynch cultists dismiss as a contract job.) Just as *Dune* can be seen as a twisted *Star Wars*, so Lynch seems, however naughty, a member of the Spielberg/Lucas club: the same boys' stories of mythic quest, morally cartoonish characters, popcorn Saturday-matinee spectacle. *Blue Velvet* was a breakthrough, no doubt: rough and ravishing, even if the naive rite-of-passage mythology marred it for me. *Twin Peaks* struck me as a prolonged tease: beautiful surfaces, hollow at the center, with little bonbons of eccentricity thrown to the fans.

Part of Lynch's new popularity is that audiences can read his shtick and feel complicity—smiling at his placement of plot conventions in smirky quotation marks. The question is whether mannerisms alone constitute a style, or better, a "vision", and, even if his do, whether having a vision is enough to make mature films that will last.

Whatever its merits, Lynch's new movie, *Wild at Heart*, hasn't much to say to adults. It is the apotheosis of movie-as-joyride, a tendency that invaded American filmmaking, for better or worse, in the 1970s. Lynch piles on heat, sensation. The virtue is, you never know what's coming next, the drawback is, you may not care. Roller coasters get monotonous.



Dare you not to find this luridness fun.

Lynch is experimenting here with melodramatic textures, borrowing from *Dynasty*-type soaps, cooking up potboiler "family secrets" and diabolical cites—none of which is particularly shocking. His characters quote pop culture (Elvis, *The Wizard of Oz*) to rope in the audience quickly, or to show that our mental lives are the sum of media inputs. The film dares you not to find all this pop detritus and trashy luridness fun. I didn't, but felt like a spoilsport. There's a certain populist bullying operating here. The plot sends a pair of country-and-western lovers, Sailor (played Elvistically by Nicolas Cage) and Lula (Laura Dern), down the highway, pursued by Lula's wicked mother, Marietta (Diane Ladd), and her hired hit men. It's the frisky young innocents, trying to follow their yellow brick road, versus the corrupt older generation.

Much has been made of Lynch's exploration of the dark side of the American psyche, the nastiness crawling just below the surface of small-town U.S.A. Why this should seem such a revelatory idea is beyond me. Perhaps what is novel is Lynch's enclosing American wholesomeness and random violence in the same embrace. (I get the feeling that the real threat to Lynch's patriotic piety is not anything as apple pie as evil, but big-city intellectuals with pluralistic values, like the obnoxious autopsist from "back east" in *Twin Peaks*.) In any case, while *Blue Velvet* managed to hit an anxious nerve by flirting with the night world, the menace in *Wild at Heart* is all bogeyman stuff. Willem Dafoe, try as he might, is not as scary as Dennis Hopper, and more important, since Sailor's and Lula's love for each other is never in doubt, all the impediments and psychopaths in their way come across as mere nuisances.

Painters love Lynch. His compositions are exquisite, the frame divided into stylized pools of shadow and light. Then there is his signature color sense, that brownish-blue acidic palette that seems to derive most from art photographers like William Eggleston and Cindy Sherman. In *Wild at Heart*, however, his inclination to create memorable autonomous images sometimes leads him off in a static, uncinematic direction. Like Fellini, Lynch is too uncritically fond of the Absurd, and cannot resist showing off his collection of miscellaneous grotesqueries: his close-up of flies buzzing on vomit, his obese topless dancers, his rich man on the can surrounded by harem girls. There's no discrimination between true perversity and silliness. Of course, Lynch might say that this silliness is intentional, that he wants a polyphony of moods from the transcendent to the inane. The trouble is, the moods get jumbled. Miraculously adaptable as the Angelo Badalamenti score is, too much stress is placed on music to key the change of emotions. The ear adjusts, but not always the heart.

One thing that gave *Blue Velvet* an eerie edge was its daring slowness, its willingness to space out—like the Dean Stockwell party where the plot drifts away and we simply watch the spook carnival unfold. *Wild at Heart* has much shorter, choppier scenes, and less vivid places. I wonder if Lynch's television work, with its episodic hopping about, has not had an adverse effect on his cinematic rhythms.

That the film took the grand prize at Cannes is a tribute to David Lynch's audaciously strong directorial personality. But for all his attempts to juice up his material, *Wild at Heart* is finally a coyly sweet, slight romantic ballad. By once again straddling the line between naive and disingenuous, Lynch provokes a shiver of fashionableness but does not go very deep.



The frisky young innocent.

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120 SECONDS TO GRAVITAS

A book report for those too busy to read the reviews

LONDON FIELDS
BY MARTIN AMIS



THE SETTING:
London, inching exhaustedly toward the next millennium but likely not to reach it. The murky backdrop is a global "Crisis"—one part terminal pollution, one part hate trigger nuclear paranoia, and one generous part human awfulness.

THE PLOT:
The plot revolves around Nicola Six, a femme fatale whose next fatality is to be herself. Realizing the inevitability of her own murder, she decides to orchestrate it with the unwitting help of three men: Keith Talent, a violent, philandering petty criminal with a Neanderthal passion for darts; Guy Clinch, a handsome and wealthy intellectual who is a sucker for romance in a world where the word is all but meaningless; and the narrator, Samson Young, a terminally ill American writer who records the story line as it and his own life unravel. Nicola uses her dazzling powers of attraction to reduce her men to quivering puddles of lust, to wreak havoc upon them while driving them to murder.



THE ENDING:
We are led to believe that Keith will be the murderer (with Guy a possible surprise alternative), but in the end it turns out that—the narrator does it, and then does himself in.

A reasonably literate **ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION** *(Or five things you could say without spilling your white wine)*

A. (THE GUT RESPONSE) "*London Fields* is frustrating as hell. It's like a nightmare high school date, which promises heavy action and leaves you on the doorstep exhausted, retching for something that never came—it's one long literary come on, the novel as sexual tease."

B. (THE LITERARY VIEW) "It's part of the literary strategy. Amis plays with our expectations, then kicks the novel in the seat of its tweed pants with a bracing dose of American style literary violence. It's a sort of *Last Exit to London*, or if you prefer, *Naked Lunch*. Anyway, sex in his novels is always just a stand-in for money and power, the real pornography of modern culture—"

C. (THE POLITICALLY CORRECT VIEW) "Come off it. *London Fields* is itself pornography. The idea that this woman, this Nicola Six, is actually orchestrating her own murder through her sexuality is shockingly misogynistic. And that doesn't even begin to address the British upper-class condescension that Amis displays toward his lower-class characters."

D. (THE GLOBAL VIEW) "All this talk about sex and class misses the point. Amis is on to something deeper here. What he's really writing about is the rape and murder of the planet. Nicola Six is like Mother Earth, a heroine hurtling toward her doom."

E. (COMMON SENSE) "I don't know. I think Amis is mostly just a great entertainer. The angrier he is, the funnier he gets."

THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM:
Amis, the bad boy of British letters, has become a more mature writer, grappling with such issues as the environment, class division, and nuclear war. While it gets heavy handed at times, a rage born of sincere concern runs through *London Fields*; Amis has traded in the black nihilism of his previous novels and become Green....

DEBUNKING THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM:
Who *cares* about the Greens? Everybody and their grandmother is politically correct these days. Amis's particular genius in his first five novels was his willingness to flaunt the conventional pieties of the age. Now he gives us Jane Fonda in novel form. Amis won't be truly great until the quality of his thinking matches the quality of his prose.

—Joan-Christophe Castelli

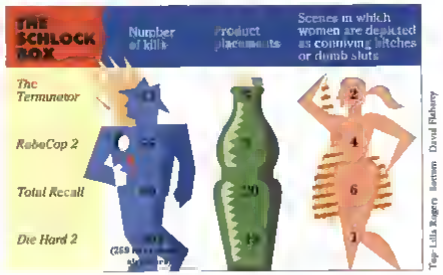
TRASH CULTURE

THE MOST IMPORTANT FILM OF THE '80s
By Michael Herschorn

At the end of James Cameron's 1984 thriller, *The Terminator*, Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton), having saved mankind by offing a killer cyborg (Arnold Schwarzenegger), stops for gas. "There's a storm coming," a young boy says. "I know," Connor replies portentously, before speeding off into the credits.

Having just sat through the film, we know that nuclear war is imminent and that, in its aftermath, Connor's son will save the world from an onslaught of "smart," murderous machines. But six years ago, when the film was released, few knew what a storm of ultraviolence *Terminator* would unleash on the nation's movie screens.

The Terminator may have been the most important film of the 1980s. Not the best, certainly, nor even the best of its genre (George Miller's *The Road Warrior* and Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* take the honors). But by sheer dint of its influence on trash film art, it reigns supreme. Cameron knew he had the genre pegged when he named a bar in the movie Tech-Noir. The movie's spawn includes Schwarzenegger in *Predator*, *Commando*,



Top: Lilla Rogers. Bottom: David Flaherty

THE ART OF CHIVALRY.



COGNAC. L'ART DE MARTELL.
SINCE 1715

and *Running Man*, Seagal in *Hard to Kill* and *Above the Law*, Stallone in *Cobra*, and the brilliant *RoboCop*. This summer we saw dozens of bodies mutilated in such sick-making offerings as *Die Hard 2*, *RoboCop 2*, and *Total Recall*. In the last, when an old woman tells Schwarzenegger, "Fuck you, asshole," trash moviegoers know this is an *homage* to Arnold's famous "Fuck you, asshole" in *Terminator*.

Packed with constant action and a steady diet of death, *Terminator* is more hilarious than hair raising. That is its perverse genius. Much like its revival-house forebears, Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* and *Throne of Blood*, Leone's *Fistful of Dollars*, and Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, *Terminator* nullifies the impact of its violence by accenting the act of the kill over the pain of being killed. But what truly differentiates *Terminator* from a long history of deathfests is its cinema-knowingness, the cheery sangfroid with which the violence is carried out. Drawing more heavily from cartoons than from life, the new ultraviolence transmutes killing into artistry, the corpse a canvas to be held up for audience acclaim. This subtext was made explicit in *Running Man*, where Schwarzenegger, in his hilarious *krautische* baritone, delivers artful puns after each victim is dispatched ("He had to split," after a bad guy is cleaved by a chain saw).

Terminator was the apotheosis of a B-movie aesthetic that demanded visceral cinematic gratification early and often. No longer was it good enough to build drama and tension, now the plot had to be forwarded in a series of bravura set pieces whose narrative irrelevance was outweighed only by their spectacular violence and deafening sound effects.

As an expression of its age, *Terminator* was strikingly on target. Flush with Reaganite paranoia (even its title is redolent of economic decline), *Terminator* and its offspring are suffused with an elemental ugliness and forceful if muddled Ayn Rand–ian politics. Heroism is solitary, and where there is an establishment, evil flourishes.

Technology is the real focus, though. It is celebrated for its ability to produce more and more phallic weaponry. But, writ large, it is reviled as a potential threat to bourgeois serenity. In *Terminator*, machines replace the Soviets as enemies of the American way. The implicit message (nothing new, of course) is that we've let machines get out of control.

The real question is whether these *movies* are out of control. *Total Recall* is so obsessed with violence that it makes *The Terminator* seem quaint. And audiences have been so primed to respond to the artful kill that the overamplified breaking of a neck is enough to provoke hysterical laughter. Even aficionados of the lowbrow must stop and ask: Have we gone too far? Kids, don't try this at home, ripping heads out of their sockets is, in the long run, not terribly fulfilling. ■

PLUG

AND THEY DON'T DO ENCORES

Even those of us who don't swear by country music have to admit there's an ideal country sound: that lean, howling-wolf feeling conjured up by the just-so piquant twang of a slide guitar. That's what listening to the Flatlanders is like. Back in '72, the trio—Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Joe Ely, and Butch Hancock—went to Nashville to record their only album, but it was way too spare for its time and place. Now Rounder Records has released the album, and it's a revelation—and about as far from Barbara Mandrell as Beethoven is from the Boston Pops.



MUSIC

CURSE OF THE COOL

By Joseph Hooper



In his latest venture, late-night-TV ads for his new album, John Lurie reclines on a Craftmatic bed and muses voluptuously about all the great things you can order by mail. "If you're like me," he says, "you like to get things through the mail. I don't know why. Maybe it makes me feel less lonely." *Voice of Chunk*, the joyful new album by Lurie and his almost-jazz combo, the Lounge Lizards, is in fact one of those things you can *only* get through the mail, like the recorded works of Zamfir, master of the pan flute. Dial 1-800-44-CHUNK, and the UPS man will be at your door any day now.

Lurie has always been a wise guy, but this marketing strategy is a dead-serious attempt to stick it to the record companies. He dropped his former label for what he felt was an abysmal job distributing his records (he sells more in Europe and Japan through foreign distributors). And he's still mad at all the other labels for not even returning his calls. ("I call back every nitwit who calls me, and I'm as busy as these record executives.")

Lurie has been obsessed with his music since he arrived in New York's East Village in the mid-1970s. For two years, he stayed inside his apartment and played the saxophone, with no particular technical distinction. "I couldn't get through a Charlie

PHOTO MARTIN SHARONG



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Parker tune," he says. "I still can't." What he *could* do was compose signature Lounge Lizards pieces from the snatches of music that occupied his head—a blues vamp, a cheesy tango, riffs inspired by early James Bond film scores. On earlier albums, you can hear a certain genius for assembling the danger music of several generations, a project saved from inspired schlockdom by the mediating influence of the modern jazz heavyweights, Mingus in particular. And by exploring fairly simple melodic figures, he leaves enough headroom for the attitude, a fragmented, postmodern version of Miles Davis's *Birth of the Cool*.

It bothers Lurie that his trademark attitude is more prominently displayed in the movies than in his music. That's because directors like Jim Jarmusch and Martin Scorsese call him when they need an oddball or a malcontent or a down-and-out shitheel. Lurie was the two-bit gambler in *Stranger than Paradise*, the two-bit pimp in *Down by Law*. Even when he was cast in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, he found himself playing the apostle James, who is pissed off because the other apostles are sitting on his blanket.

When he went to Morocco to play James, Lurie jammed with a group of local Gnowan musicians. Among the Gnowan, he says, he rediscovered the joy of playing music, an element that cool guys can sometimes overlook. Lurie returned to New York with some Moroccan flute figures and recorded *Voice of Chunk*. This time the neat riffs suggest something close to form, one of Lurie's blithe alto-sax motifs runs through the work like a golden thread. All that was left to do was to sell the project—on the face of it, the easy part. Whatever cool lacks in metaphysics, it usually makes up for in marketing.

So far the TV ads have bombed. "There are about fifty record people who decide what everybody in America gets to hear, and they all know each other," Lurie says darkly. But his paranoid vision doesn't explain his failure to go over one-on-one with late-night America. Really, how could he miss? Hadn't the Rose's people used Lurie's *jolis laids* features, his way with designer clothes, to sell their lime juice?

The curse of Lurie's take-it-or-leave-it cool is that it serves a minimalist movie director and a juice concern better than it does his passionate feelings about *Voice of Chunk*. (The curse of the times, perhaps, Brando and Dean were cool/passionate, Lurie is a modern cool/ironic.) "What really interests me about my music is religious communication—transmigration of the soul," he says. "That's not cool."

He's right. Not even Lurie dares to talk about the transmigration of the soul on cable. Instead he's left with his ironic persona lying on a Craftmatic bed, an image that hasn't moved large numbers of people to make that phone call. What a cool guy needs is someone to shill for him, someone who is willing to be uncool in order to move the product. That phone number again is 1-800-44-CHUNK. ☐

CURTAIN CALL

THE MAN WHO DIED IN TIME

Charles Willeford died just in time to avoid the repackaging of his pulp as slick—the fate that lies in wait for our best crime writers. Whether, after the film version of *Miami Blues*, he can posthumously escape being turned into the "next" Elmore Leonard or Tony Hillerman is more doubtful.

I bought my first Willeford novel in the sort of Florida mall where Willeford used to wander after his day's work, collecting phrases and characters. By further good chance, I read the book—was it *Sideswipe? New Hope for the Dead?*—in Riviera Beach, which is where Hoke Moseley, his fictional detective, grew up. It is also the kind of place that, like Okeechobee and West Palm, is, as much as downtown Miami, part of Willeford's Florida, which is not Sonny Crockett's Florida.



Willeford possessed a classic résumé. Orphaned at eight, he rode the rails, then at sixteen joined the Depression-era Army. He did some boxing, to the detriment of his nose, and commanded tanks in Europe. He also wrote novels, sequestering himself on weekend leaves in the Powell Hotel in San Francisco. They are pulp noir, B-novels, as weird and tough as Jim Thompson's, with such titles as *Honey Gal*, *Pick-Up*, and *The Woman Chaser*, and sold hundreds of thousands of paperback copies.

You've got to love a guy who could write a book of avant-garde poetry called *Proletarian Laughter* as well as produce the psychopath Freddy Frenger, who, while in San Quentin, "traded his pudgy punk, a golden-brown Chicano from East Los Angeles, for eight cartons of Chesterfields and 200 Milky Way candy bars" to set against Sergeant Hoke Moseley, who has alimony problems, a La-Z-Boy recliner, a 1974 Le Mans—and dentures.

At some point, things started to go to hell for Willeford. His books began to appear in hardcover. Roger Corman made a film of *Cockfighter*. Elmore Leonard went and gave a nice quote. Soon Willeford's gravelly voice was to be heard on NPR. Then, shortly after publication of *The Way We Die Now*, Willeford hopped the Big Freight, Went over the Hill. He was just in time.

—Phil Patton

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Replace the old belts. The right-wide black satin-finished milline by Stafford Executive, $24.



The Stafford Executive gator-shm fold-wa[illegible] black cowhide adds [illegible] look, [illegible]



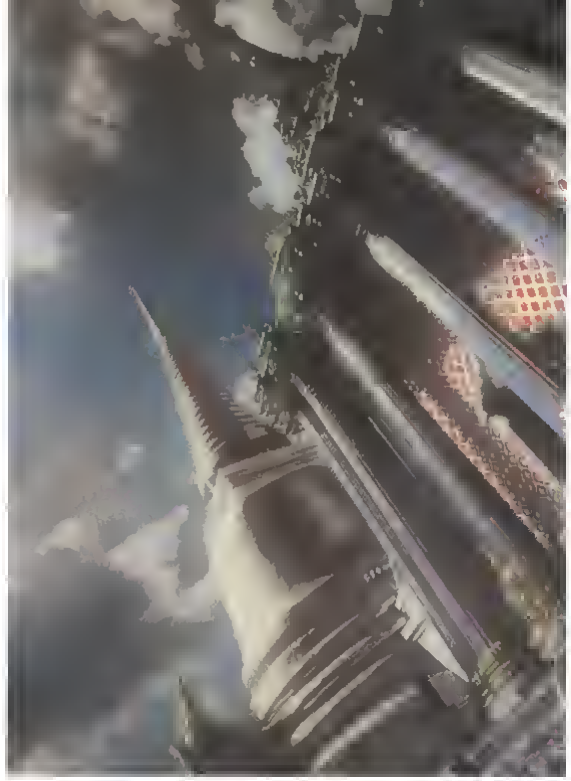
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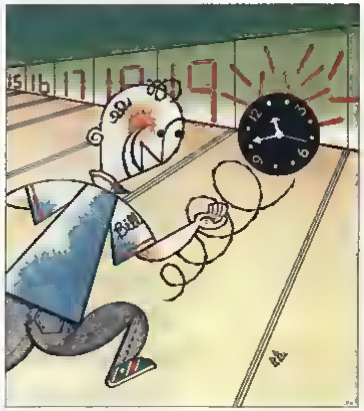


Aren't You Glad You Use Dials?

By Donald R. Katz

ONE MORNING NEAR the beginning of the last decade, just seconds before the hour, I found myself in an auditorium filled with well over a thousand futurists. The mixture of notable scientists, researchers, inventors, sci fi junkies, and more than a few people wearing Birkenstock sandals, weird smiles, and those little beanies fitted with rotors, were attendees at a congress of the World Future Society. I can't quite recall if we were listening to the future senator from Tennessee, Al Gore, or perhaps the future presidential aspirant Gary Hart, but what I do remember—as if it had happened this morning—is that all of a sudden, at 10:00 A.M. the speech was interrupted by a beep. Then another beep. Then another. Then the bleating of hundreds of digital watches exploded in a dissonant, deafening tattoo. I noticed several futurists looking down the rows at one another in the stunned silence that followed, and I remember quite clearly that the looks on their faces said, "We've won."

Few objects are more symbolic of the onslaught of digital technology than those ugly, television-shaped, silicon-chip-laden computers for the wrist—tiny devices that only a few years before their appearance would have required a gymnasium full of vacuum tubes. These machines exploded on the material plane so powerfully that it seemed certain the analog sweep of a second hand would be relegated to the museum alongside pendulums and sundials. The very expressions "second hand" and "quarter of" would soon be designated "now rare" in *Webster's* and join terms like "ice man" and "wireless" in the technological museum. With the advent of the semiconductor and its digital aesthetic, time would finally be understood for what it really is—numbers.



If you still think digital is the future, you're living in the past

Because they were really computers, digital watches could report the time something took, or the number of times something happened, from dives down to thirty feet to the points scored in a tennis match. Digital watches displayed dates, calculations, temperatures, barometric pressure, blood pressure, height, and heartbeats.

VCRs, camcorders, microwaves, televisions, car dashboards, answering machines, thermometers, the clocks on top of office buildings, and even the clocks in front of classrooms all went digital. The kids, it seemed, loved digital most of all. In 1983 digital technology came to consumer audio in the form of the compact disc player.

Digital meant superior, precise, and totally modern. Analog meant fuzzy, less accurate than modern life demanded, and generally inferior on all counts.

Analog and digital are technically two means of quantifying the physical universe, of carving discernible notches in space and time. Analog information is expressed as a physical analogy of a real thing. Most of us actually think that the temperature is *rising*, but in fact the idea is an analogy, a measure of the height of mercury, for example, when it gets hot or cold. As soon as you regard the analog measure inside the thermometer and compare it with a number on the glass, you've converted something analog to something digital. Digital is numbers.

After World War II, it was discovered that every bit of information—values, colors, the amplitude of any wave—could be broken down and sort of rounded off to an incredibly precise digital expression. A phonograph needle actually scrapes over little bumps and undulations within a groove that replicate the shape of sound waves. A CD player just reads a numeric description of each wave and converts it into very clean sound. Modern computers need digital information to compute.

An early-1970s digital watch cost nearly $2,000, and you needed two hands to light up the little red LEDs. Then powerful batteries no bigger than freckles enabled the watches to shrink, and advances in integrated circuitry shrunk the *price* like crazy. LCD made

Donald R. Katz *is a contributing editor of Esquire*

PHILIP ANDERSON

them readable, and by the time the American digital producers were replaced by Casio and the Hong Kong makers, the Swiss watch industry was bankrupt.

But then—more abruptly than the transformation appeared—digitization stopped. In its place there arose a reaction so radical, and a resurgence of an analog aesthetic so powerful, that within the two or three years ending just a year ago, the bellwether digital watch and its industry disappeared. A few digitals are now sold for "sport applications," but the digital watch is dead. The same designers in Detroit who demanded that every dial be digitized brought back the old gauges. Microwave ovens appeared with analog dials instead of digitally oriented buttons. Musicians began to demand that state-of-the-art recording sessions be processed by running certain sounds through old-fashioned vacuum tube systems, and audiophiles began to complain that you could hear the "dead spots" between the digits of a CD recording. Analog phonograph records, many claimed, were more natural. Consumer audio components appeared with knobs again. Signs appeared in theater lobbies demanding that patrons turn off their Space Invader watches—not that anyone sophisticated enough to buy a theater ticket would be caught dead with something as tacky as a digital watch.

Analog nostalgia became the reigning technological aesthetic. People began to lie about how they knew all along it was a fad.

Looking back at the vertical rise and fall of digital, it's clear that some of the public reaction had to do with "interface" problems, poorly conceived applications, and the like. Who hasn't seen a digital clock flashing eternally on a VCR or a coffee maker because the owner can't figure out how to program the thing? For many people, daylight saving time came to refer to the six months during which you had to add one hour to what it said on your watch. Don Norman, a University of California professor who studies the design of new machines, contends that as soon as the number of functions on a device exceeds the number of controls, the design becomes unwieldy and the device harder to use. In his book *The Design of Everyday Things*, Norman calls this an illustration of the "paradox of technology." There are psychological and empirical reasons that people like knobs, Norman says, and there are times when the analog idea of "a little bit" is better, even if less precise, than a few more digital pulses. I've often found that the volume level I want on the television is actually in between two pokes to the digital volume control.

But the death of the digital watch was brought on by other, less concrete reactions. As the digitals got cheaper, more disposable, and more—how to say this—*offshore* in origin, powerful antidigital, pro-analog taste factors blindsided the digital aesthetic completely. Roman numerals suddenly appeared current and indicative of superior taste, those multiplex bar arrangements that would be illuminated to form any numeral or even letters were chintzy (even as chintz reascended the class ladder, along with the general longing for things as old and kinda old-shoe and old-money like and disconnected from reality as—the Reagans). After all, did the wood-burled dash of a fine old Bentley have digital readouts? Of course not. It had—and still has, thank you—toggle and rocker switches. Analog is classic. Digital is nouveau.

As the watch symbolized the rise of things digital, the apogee of antidigital superior taste continued to be the Rolex watch, a fully antiquated piece of technology that stands almost alone in abjuring the quartz mechanism (save one little-talked-about model) that allows a $12 Rolex knockoff to keep time as well as one of the $1,500–$100,000 originals.

"The soulless microchip," a guy from Rolex sniffed when I mentioned the accuracy of digitals and quartz analog watches, "has very little appeal here."

Indeed. This assumption of an inherent spiritual deficiency in the digital aesthetic is actually appropriate, because, beyond preferences of style and design, the pro-analog resurgence includes a third front almost moralistic in tone. Analog is continuous, flowing, unbroken, organic, and human. Digital is segmented, angular, limited, mechanistic, and soulless. We are all, in short, analog beings. We *believe* in knobs.

The metaphysics of analog nostalgia was highlighted by the contention that CDs had audible "dead spots" between the digits. (This is crazy, because a reconstruction filter fills in the "sonic blanks," but people still *heard* the gaps.)

And what about the children? Say "the second hand" or "a quarter to three" to an eleven-year-old, and chances are the kid will say, "What?" Digital time meant that children couldn't really *tell* time. Analog clocks, after all, made you think. They compelled you to locate the moment. A generation was in danger of being digitized.

The forces of reaction were probably even more zealous back in the fourteenth century. Imagine it. The clock tower hasn't been invented yet, and the personal clock is two hundred years off. Time is marked by public, though rather arbitrary, bell ringing and by the occasional glimpse at the high-end hourglasses rich people owned. And here all of a sudden somebody wants to draw—for some reason—a circle and slap a bunch of numbers around it! Call them "hours," they say.

But what about the kids? They won't even know what five bells means anymore! And these "hands" go so slowly you can't see them move. This round clock is nothing but an abstraction of the reality of time; this is just a tacky quantification, an analogy for the true cadences of nature. *Like sands through the hourglass*, after all, *so are the days of our lives.*

Who hasn't seen a digital clock flashing eternally on a VCR or a coffee maker because the owner can't figure out how to program the thing?

Once the analog nostalgia and antidigital jihad have tempered, the best outcome will be the possibility of everyone making a choice. If digital thermometers get cheaper, I will certainly opt for one for the kids, and I will love it when the anxiety-provoking analog gas gauge in my car is replaced by one of the nifty digital readouts, now in BMWs, that tell you how many miles you can go before you'll be out of gas. Since analog altimeters in airplanes have been known to cause accidents, digital will surely remain my choice in cockpit appointments, and if the relatively crude technology driving televison goes digital, I can't imagine claiming that the rabbit-ear antennae you have to turn away from sunspots is representative of a more noble technological state.

On the other hand, I would never want my car steering wheel digitized, and I happen to *like* knowing how fast I'm driving by glancing at a gauge not unlike a huge slice of apple pie. Call me old-fashioned. My watch is analog and always will be, not because of any philosophical posture, but because too much of my existence is predicated on how much time I have left to get something done. No matter how you read it, analogize it, or digitize it, as the guy with the wild white hair pointed out a while back, time is one of the more relative things we've got. ◻





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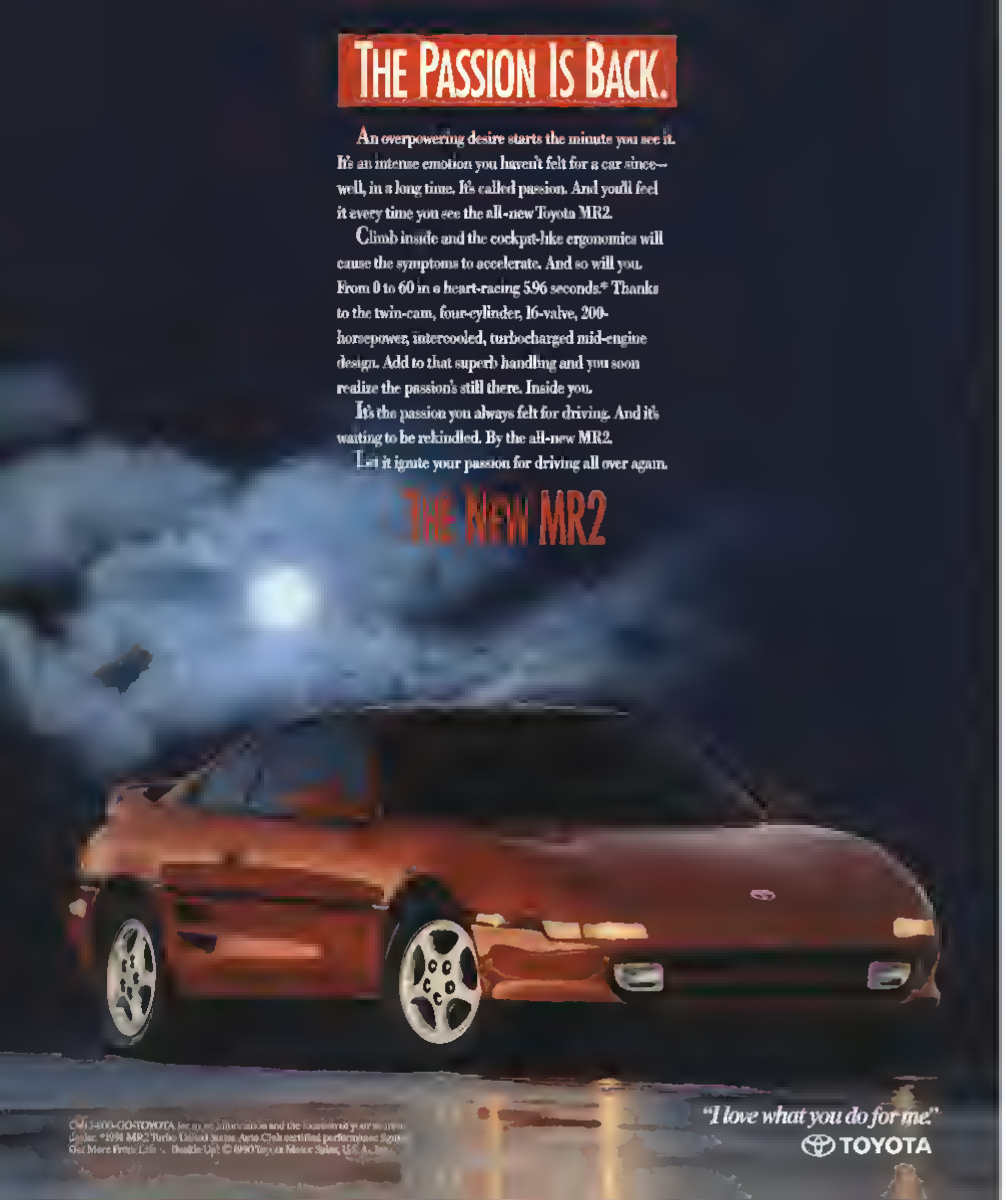
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How I Look

By Stanley Bing

MOST OF THE TIME you have it together. You glance in the mirror and recognize what you see. That's because you're integrated. From the first moment you gain cognizance of yourself as a person to the nanosecond just prior to the final glimpse, there is a sequential continuity. You do a short update on the old self-image, pull the entire abstraction into focus, and then move on, refreshed, solidified, with the sense that you as a physical concept continue, move through space, and are recognizable to others, and most important, to yourself. Simple? You bet. Necessary? Not if you're schizophrenic. Otherwise, no question.

That's why I received such a shock at 3:00 AM the other night. Morning. By what I saw, I mean. I don't want to talk about that now. The point is, I didn't expect what I got. I was surprised, in other words. And I don't ever want that to happen again. It's too disconcerting. I'm not worried, though. I think I have my full range of personal self-images down pretty clearly. I must say there are quite a few of them, but in each and every case I believe I could gaze upon that self and say, "Yo! Stan! How ya doin'?"

How I look sleeping: A capuchin monkey, fourteen inches long, with a full cowl of hair. I am curled, on my side, with my legs hiked up to my chin. There is a look of intense concentration on my face, as the dreams and fears of infancy play behind my brow. I am sucking on my cheek. This, my father used to tell me, was how I looked at birth. Except for the times he said I resembled a prune.

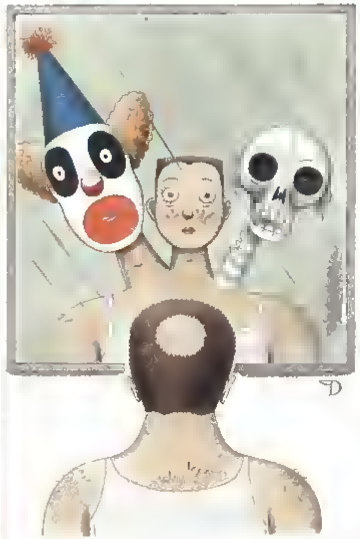
How I look first thing in the morning: The polystyrene Neanderthal man now on display at the natural-history museum. Molto grizzle. Befuddled, ill-tempered expression. Small beginnings of a second chin. Slap that thing! Posture not good. Midsection shows the accumulation of a lifetime of bear meat and strong mead. Upper arms still give the illusion of power. Ready to haul off and fight if I have to? You bet. But not really, looking that way is half the battle. Chest deep and broad, covered with a pelt of fur. Whose is it? Oh, right. It's mine, 'cause I'm all growed up now.

How I look when I've just stepped out of the shower: God in the Sistine Chapel. Hair slightly more spiky, okay, but just as formidable, a lump of male humanity glistening with rolling droplets, a massive physical presence born of the luminous marriage of earth and water, that's me.

How I look with a moustache: Ion Tiriac, Romanian former trainer of Ilie Nastase.

How I look with a full beard. Charles Manson in a good mood.

How I look when I join a friend at lunch at his gym, and must wait for him by the door of the locker room as all around me a herd of extremely fit and ruddy men stream by me to the weight room, the showers, and the salad bar: Lumpy Rutherford. Were there a mirror in the place, the being returning my gaze would be a boy, eight years old. Not exactly round, just chunky in all the obvious places. My head, spherical as a fine melon—casaba, perhaps—is covered with a smooth brush of fuzz not unlike Sinead O'Connor's. My face is utterly circular, too, and only a few lines have begun to creep across my brow. For some reason, my mother has dressed me in a T-shirt with horizontal stripes, which does not make me look any leaner. I am shifting from foot to foot and craning my neck (which has a small ripple of extra flesh at the back) for a glimpse of my friend, but I do not wish to enter the locker room, where there are so many bigger boys around. I am blushing, and my palms are beginning to perspire. Above the bridge of my nose there is a deep furrow, and my eyes are kind of glassy. I am preoccupied with the expectation that at any moment



I'm Zeus.

I'm Adonis. I'm my own worst nightmare

Stanley Bing *is a contributing editor of Esquire*

BLAIR DRAWSON

some huge jock will emerge from the swinging doors, spot me, say, "Hiya, tubby," and demand my lunch money.

How I look when my feelings are hurt: Laurence Olivier in *Hamlet*, sans the yellow chrome-dome. General aura of injured innocence, yes. My cheeks puff out a tiny bit, too, and my chin hardens against the impulse to tremble. My eyes may also grow somewhat liquid, and a small, false smile will ply the edges of my mouth. If I must maintain a game face for more than a couple of seconds, my brows descend like a venetian blind over my eye sockets, creating a general mien of annoyed engrossment.

How I look at my desk, working: An enormous vulture perched hungrily over a carcass that is in its last stages of life. If this conjures up a grotesque impression, so much the better. A man at work should be a fearsome thing to gaze upon, particularly when he doesn't want to speak with you.

How I look when I need a haircut: Eraserhead after an aggressive combing.

How I look on the train. Broderick Crawford, of *Highway Patrol*, after his '55 Plymouth two tone broke down.

How I look to young people at a nightclub after work: Jack Webb.

How I look after two light beers and a shot of Scotch in a busy, friendly pub: Dylan Thomas at nineteen. A jawline like a razor blade. My pants hug my hips, not because they won't fit around my girth, but because *my waist is still smaller than my hips!* I lean in a jaunty manner on the bar, scanning the talent like a weasel who has recently fed but not enough. A predatory smile scampers across my lips. Occasionally I take a shot, neat, and toss it back. Ah, to be a poet in the latter days of the century!

How I look when I choke on my drink: Danny Thomas doing a "spit rake." A couple of weeks ago, I tried to toss back a couple of ounces of raw whisky, neat, and listen to a funny joke at the same time. It didn't work. For the first time in my life the spirits stopped short and were immediately rerouted through my nose. For the rest of the evening, my eyes and nose ran copiously, and I conveyed the impression, I think, of a child who just lost his parents in the lobby of a large hotel. People kept coming up to me and saying, "Are you all right?" "Sure I am!" I chuckled, "for someone who just aspirated four ounces of Scotch!"

How I look sitting around watching TV with friends: Jack Germond discussing politics with Bryant Gumbel. This unkind observation, recently offered by a former pal of mine, is documented here to keep the record straight. I utterly reject this packaging concept. First of all, I am not bald, nor does it appear I am likely to be. Second, my suit jacket and the collar of my shirt still fasten, which is remarkable, given the shoddy workmanship on most clothing nowadays. It occurs to me now that my friend may have meant to imply that I look well informed, opinionated, and astute. *This* is credible. In my mind's eye, I've seen myself at business meetings, leaning forward to make a point with verve and gusto, and am certain at that moment that I have all the qualities people ascribe to the perspicacious. I don't know. Maybe if I've had a very large lunch, there's some truth in it. But I'm sure I look much better come 4:00 P.M. snack time.

How I look playing the guitar: Eric Clapton. But only when I close my eyes.

How I look while sunbathing: Ernest Borgnine on leave in *McHale's Navy*, with Captain Binghamton nowhere in sight.

How I look when I'm angry: Ernest Borgnine in a Hawaiian shirt, just before he beat Frank Sinatra to death in *From Here to Eternity*.

How I look while I'm listening to a joke that is not funny: Dick Tracy. My chin is granite. I am looking at my watch. If people still wore fedoras, I'd be in one.

There was a pucker at the end of my nose, as if someone had folded it back and left it there until it lost its shape and grew . . . pulpy.

How I look when I'm lecturing my children on some gaffe: Ward Cleaver, I hope, although it's possible I end up coming across as Dr. Samuel Johnson putting young Boswell to sleep after a huge supper.

How I look on the fourth day of a business retreat, while sitting at the last wrap-up breakfast, listening to the final consultant float the very last operating philosophy: Raymond Burr, when he could still move around but had to wear suits that made him look like the side of a panel truck.

How I look after an all-you-can-eat brunch at the Marriott, including bloody marys, a large omelet, a flapjack or two, bacon, sausage, liver and onions, croissants, coffee, fruit, and a bran muffin. William Conrad.

How I look at 8:47 A.M., as I step out of my office on my way to my first meeting of the day: Clark Kent, all crisp fabric and right angles, rocketing to an interpersonal exchange for which I am supremely prepared. I have everything I need packed into my two-hundred pound format. My face is as smooth as a baby's bonnet. My eyes are clear and bright, my nose moist and cool. My lashes, always one of my best features, curl up with saucy abandon. In fact, nothing about me droops. On my feet are a pair of shoes that cost as much as my first stereo. My socks match. My shoulders are blocked and steamed into position. My neck rises straight and proud from my seventeen-and-a-half inch collar. My cheeks have a spot of color and my hair, while not greased back, is puffed into a position of controlled je ne sais quoi. I am Man in His Prime. It is this man who is always with me, never too far away. Even at my worst, I see myself as a Rodin statue stalking the marketplace of life in robes of copper and iron. Don't you? You should. Except—

How I look at 3:00 in the morning: Untidied. I got in from a night on the town and had some trouble falling asleep. A surfeit of physical abuse always does that to me. I read for a while and tried to decompress. Finally, I sensed that if I lay flat in a dark bedroom, next to my wife's gentle, regular breathing, and counted backward from one hundred, I would soon lose consciousness.

In preparation for that magical moment, I went into the bathroom to brush my teeth and caught a peek of myself in the mirror.

I was wearing an old T-shirt that sagged in the mid-section, creating a false impression of shapelessness. My hair was vertical, my skin gray and flaccid. The startled face that stared back at me was creased in a number of new places: the corners of my mouth, beneath my eyes, and worse, my cheeks, my jowls. Did I say *jowls*? Yes. Also, my earlobes were strangely huge, and there was a pucker at the end of my nose, as if someone had folded it back and left it there until it lost its shape and grew . . . pulpy. In fact, my entire countenance had more pouches than an English smoking jacket. My forehead was low and grumbling. And my expression . . . Good Lord.

Whose face was this? The countenance of a man caught in a desolate corner of the county after the very last bus has run. A frightened face, cringing from something inexorable, green, and scaly bearing down at high speed from Who Knows Where.

Fortunately, I had a really good shave the next morning, took a short nap on the train, and got to my 9:00 meeting looking just north of a million bucks. Thank God my conception of myself is huge. And there's always room for one more. ◘



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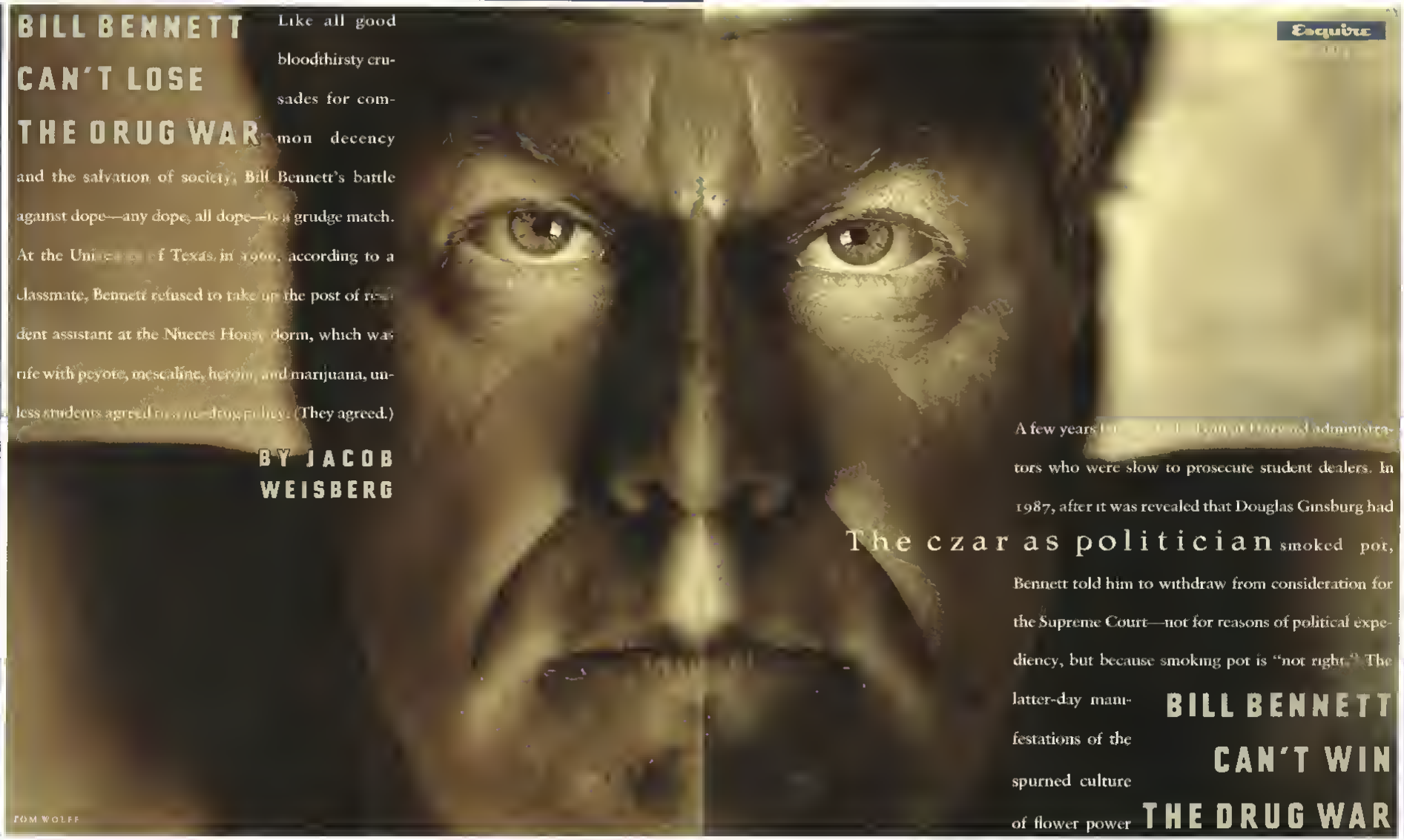
1772 Tall Clock, MMA Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Brooks H. Marsh, 1976

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is now open until 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays. So why not drop by for a visit? After all, there's never been a better time.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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BILL BENNETT CAN'T LOSE THE DRUG WAR

Like all good bloodthirsty crusades for common decency and the salvation of society, Bill Bennett's battle against dope—any dope, all dope—is a grudge match. At the Univ[illegible] of Texas in 1960, according to a classmate, Bennett refused to take up the post of resident assistant at the Nueces House dorm, which was rife with peyote, mescaline, heroin, and marijuana, unless students agreed [illegible] anti-drug policy. (They agreed.)

BY JACOB WEISBERG

TOM WOLFE

Esquire

The czar as politician

A few years [illegible] Harvard administrators who were slow to prosecute student dealers. In 1987, after it was revealed that Douglas Ginsburg had smoked pot, Bennett told him to withdraw from consideration for the Supreme Court—not for reasons of political expediency, but because smoking pot is "not right." The latter-day manifestations of the spurned culture of flower power

BILL BENNETT CAN'T WIN THE DRUG WAR

and permissiveness remain at the heart of Bennett's demonology. "Part of the legacy of Woodstock was tolerance of drugs, and let us be glad that is gone rather than wishing it were back," he said at a press conference last year. "We do not want 1969 back in terms of its view of drugs."

Back in those drug-addled days, even a stouthearted type like Bennett was bound to flirt with radicalism. A supporter of civil rights and an opponent of the Vietnam War, he almost joined Students for a Democratic Society as an undergraduate. He sought advice about graduate school from notorious lefty William Sloane Coffin. Still, despite the fact that Bennett was young during this period, played guitar in a band called Plato and the Guardians, and once had a date with Janis Joplin, his denial of ever even trying pot is plausible. "He was a square," says Wendell Willkie II, a friend from Harvard who worked for Bennett at the Department of Education.

By the 1970s his squareness had hardened into an ideological posture. He emerged from the previous decade not just as a nonparticipant, but as a resolute enemy of the counterculture, a believer in strict moral authority, and an enemy of hedonism and experimentation.

ON TV, BENNETT SAID THAT BEHEADING DRUG DEALERS WOULD BE "MORALLY PLAUSIBLE."

All of which makes him such a natural to lead us in our war on drugs. But a year and a half into the campaign, the czar is fighting not one war but two.

One is a war he can't help but win, which is a good thing, because the other is a war he can't help but lose.



IT'S A DISMAL SUNDAY afternoon in February, the kind of day when you couldn't pay most people to go outside, the kind of day you couldn't pay Bill Bennett to stay inside. He'd rather be slogging around a football field in Chevy Chase, firing lethal forty yard spirals and pummeling bureaucrats into the mud.

No one is having quite as much fun out in the drizzle as Bennett is today. Certainly not the members of the czar's army, his large security detail, who patrol the perimeter and whisper into their walkie-talkies about an uninvited observer who might be an emissary from the Medellín cartel. Probably not the bright young boys from Harvard, the lieutenants in the war on drugs, who wince at their grimy extracurricular assignment. Definitely not a visiting journalist prodded by suspicious looks from the heavily armed secret-service men.

But Bennett is obviously having a great time. Shambling around in dirty sweats and crimson ski cap, the gruff, six-two, 225-pound captain barks obscenities like the Brooklyn cabbie he resembles. At Williams he played offensive tackle, but here he's quarterback. "He's *always* the quarterback," says one player. "That's just understood."

The game is contact touch, with a lot of knockdowns and hard hits. Sam Brunelli, who once played for the Denver Broncos, is a regular on Bennett's team. Outsiders are sometimes invited, but made to understand that the scrimmage is *serious*. "He pounded me into the turf like I have never been pounded before," says another one time participant. "I felt like I was in a cartoon."

Come Monday morning, the quarterback turns quartermaster, commanding much the same team at the Office of National Drug Control Policy's unmarked headquarters somewhere in northwest Washington. Here the czar's minions engage in another kind of contest, but the approach to the two games isn't so different. Like their boss, the young men from Harvard tend to mix metaphors of sports and war in discussions of public policy. Advancing plans to build a prison, they "move the ball." With some bad press they "fumble." They thrill to see their leader on end runs around political obstacles. Bennett, like any smart coach, doesn't risk team spirit by talking about failure, he speaks only of victory, which may appear distant, but whose ultimate arrival is certain. "He never gives up," says Peter Greer, a Boston University dean who worked under Bennett at the Department of Education. "He'll be down 5–1 in tennis, but he'll come back and beat you 7–5."

The coterie of young disciples is central to Bennett's mission; he holds them with

Jacob Weisberg *is associate editor for* The New Republic. *This is his first article for* Esquire.

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what Greer calls "biological leadership," an intangible magnetism that attracts bright young men to crusades. "You work hard, partly to please him and partly to prove you're better than he thinks you should be," Greer explains. The young assistants radiate the sense of being an elect, embarked on a quest of surpassing importance. Bennett's boys scoff at professional bureaucrats as "career scum" and defend their leader with a fervor rare in Washington. Coaching his team, the forty-seven-year-old drug czar recalls the Victorian ideal of Muscular Christianity, the notion of a connection between physical, intellectual, and moral vigor. Though Bennett is a Catholic, educated by Jesuits, and many of his bright young assistants are Jews, he leads them with the kind of Protestant missionary zeal that built the British Empire and the Boy Scouts. "There is nothing that can't be conquered through dedication, strength, and fair play," he exhorts them. The attitude is summed up in the remark attributed to Wellington—that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.

The war on drugs, then, will be won or lost on the gridirons of Chevy Chase. If they hang tough and play fair, Bennett and his team must surely triumph over those who aren't out playing football on mucky Sunday afternoons: the spineless intellectuals, the lazy underclass types. The enemy.



But what is it that brings those highbrows and lowbrows together to antagonize middlebrow sensibilities? Lots of theories have been ventured, but whatever it is, it keeps popping up in American life, at least twice within recent memory. Today, the uppers and lowers are once again safely at odds, but in the Thirties, the intellectual Left and the working class came together under the union label. And in the Sixties, well-schooled liberals and poor urban minorities combined to fight for economic equality, democratic education, and all-around personal freedom—which included, in some minds, the freedom to experiment with drugs.

That kind of personal indulgence was an alien concept to the William Bennett who left Arlington, Virginia, for Williams College in 1961. His parents had separated when Bill and his brother, Robert, now a successful Washington attorney, were boys. Their mother moved them from their birthplace, Brooklyn, to suburban Washington, where by all accounts she raised them with a firm hand. The straitened circumstances of a broken home seem only to have increased the pressure on them to succeed. At Gonzaga, a large Catholic high school with a reputation for toughness, Bill Bennett was a football star and an A student.

Despite his own intellectual pedigree—a Ph.D. from the University of Texas in political philosophy and a law degree from Harvard—Bennett expends much of his bluster on what seems to be a vendetta against institutions of higher academe. This has been a constant theme in all the positions he has held, from chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to Secretary of Education, to director of drug-control policy. Coming from a position of superior macho, he likes to suggest that academics are effete and timid, snobbish about the blue-blooded American virtue that his crusades embody. During the 1988 presidential campaign, he said, "I know the Brookline and Cambridge crowd. They sneer at patriotism. These people believe they know better." Bennett himself was sneering, in classic demagogue fashion, the crapulous assaults on the Ivy League have become a hallmark of his political style.

Bennett's penchant for Harvard-bating became apparent after Ronald Reagan appointed him Secretary of Education in 1985. Like the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Department of Education doesn't administer major programs or have a large budget. Reagan's stated position was that the agency, which Republicans opposed when Jimmy Carter created it during his last year as President, shouldn't exist at all. To run it, he wanted someone who was comfortable with the limited role of being an advocate. Bennett famously called the job a "bully pulpit," a phrase coined by Teddy Roosevelt that originally meant a very good perch from which to lecture. Bennett gave it the added sense of neighborhood bully.

He used his new position to rally on behalf of the education reform movement, in favor of merit pay for teachers, tuition tax credits, and vouchers. Bennett brought a measure of clarity and realism to the discussion, publishing a series of pamphlets about "what works," and taking his verbal machete into the jargon jungle of the education debate. But Bennett's moralism and powerful authoritarian instincts seemed to win out over any neoconservative pragmatism. Visiting 130 schools as a guest speaker, he criticized AIDS education that promoted the use of condoms and campaigned for voluntary school prayer with consequentialist arguments about how religious observance promotes self-restraint and good behavior. Especially after the publication of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, in 1987, Bennett fulminated against the malign legacy of the counterculture, sometimes synonymous in his mind with liberalism itself. He attacked public schools as a "desert of moral relativism" and argued for "the Judeo-Christian ethic," abandoned as a result of the 1960s.

Increasingly, his speeches came to revolve around sound bites with calculated shock value. To college students complaining about cuts in financial aid, Bennett suggested "stereo divestiture, automobile divestiture, three-weeks-at-the-beach divestiture." He was right to challenge the teachers' unions and bureaucracy, but habitually referring to them as "the blob" didn't help persuade educators of the merit of his cause. "He relished the chance to do combat," says Chester Finn, who worked for Bennett at Education. "Part of him has never stopped being a football player." If there's a trade-off between winning a point and getting his way, Bennett invariably chooses the former. According to his own assessment, Education Secretary Bennett succeeded in the job by defining the scope of the problem and spurring the reform movement on its way. But judged by test scores and dropout rates, his bullying ultimately did little to improve the state of the public schools.

EVEN BEFORE GEORGE BUSH was elected President, Bennett fixed his sights on the post of drug czar, which had been created in 1988 by legislation that a Democrat, Joseph Biden of Delaware, sponsored in the Senate. After leaving Education in 1989, Bennett served a stint on the lecture circuit with the stated purpose of making

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some money, but soon grew impatient for a return to public life. According to friends, he felt the Reagan administration handled the drug issue badly and thought he could do a better job. Rather than wait to be tapped, he called President-elect Bush and asked. The position seemed tailor-made for Bennett: an even bullier pulpit from which to rail about relativism and the Decline of Western Civilization. The White House's first choice was Arizona senator Dennis DeConcini, but after he said no, Bush offered it to Bennett. Bennett wanted Bush to make it a cabinet position, Bush declined, and Bennett came aboard anyway, bringing along for the ride his cadres from the Department of Education.

His first task was to hook Bush on drugs. Soon after his appointment, he began an intensive lobbying effort to get the White House to make the issue a priority. "A lot of people told him not to push it," one senior administration official said. Budget Chief Richard Darman, Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, and Commerce Chief Robert Mosbacher, among others, were unconvinced of the political advantages of the issue. But Bennett enlisted pollster-in-chief Robert Teeter and Republican National Committee chairman Lee Atwater in a lobbying effort that ultimately prevailed. "Bennett has to be credited with getting George Bush into the war on drugs," says Terry Eastland, a former Justice official who has been close to Bennett since the two coauthored a book of critical essays about affirmative action in 1979.

Atwater, an advocate of the political merits of the drug issue for Republicans, became and has remained a strong Bennett backer. "I am convinced, after looking at polls every day in my life, that crime and drugs is the number one issue," Atwater says. "To the extent that we are seen as the party that is tougher dealing with drug kingpins, we are going to be very successful." Bennett's other chief ally was the press. In his first several months in office he ran a campaignlike schedule of visits to prisons, treatment centers, and schools, offering constant photo opportunities and press availabilities. His initial coverage was overwhelmingly favorable. Good PR pointed the way for Bush, who sealed his commitment to the war with a televised address on September 5, 1989.

A few days later, Bennett unveiled his game plan, the *National Drug Control Strategy*. "Young people and adults alike must be consistently confronted with the same message: Drugs are wrong, they are harmful, and their use will bring certain consequences," he writes in the introduction. "We must avoid the easy temptation to blame our troubles first on those chronic problems of social environment—like poverty and racism—which help to breed and spread the contagion of drug use." He cannot make his case without laying on a huge dollop of sanctimony. "Whatever else it does, drug use degrades human character. It is a hollow, degrading, and deceptive pleasure, of course, and pursuing it is an appallingly self-destructive impulse."

HE HAS RIGGED OUR EXPECTATIONS SO THAT HE CAN DECLARE VICTORY AT ANY TIME.

His belief in individual responsibility leads him to emphasize law enforcement over treatment and education, the preferred liberal answers. Yet he is not so much interested in enforcement as he is in punishment. At Education, "He loved the idea of taking away kids' driver's licenses," according to Greer. As drug czar he has proposed doing the same for casual drug users, as well as confiscating their cars, rescinding their student aid, publishing their names in the newspaper, and notifying their employers. He looks for retributive ideas with a Dantesque ring. For more serious offenses he prefers "military-style boot camps," the seizing of assets, and executions. He has spoken approvingly of the idea of shooting down planes suspected of smuggling drugs into the country. On *Larry King Live* he said that beheading drug dealers would be "morally plausible." (He added, "There's no moral problem there. I used to teach ethics—trust me.")

One weekend last fall, Bennett was all over the public affairs TV circuit, giving performances that were classically demagogic, constantly invoking the will of the people when confronted with objections to the crusade. The ghost he conjured up was that of Spiro Agnew, answering the naysayers of the Vietnam era. "Shame on them, I say," he said of the legalization advocates on CNN's *Evans & Novak* program. "Happily, the large part of the American people, the great mass of the American people, are opposed to this idea." On *This Week with David Brinkley*, Bennett freely used the discredited statistic of 375,000 crack babies to answer the legalizers, suggesting that intellectuals were content with black autogenocide. Elsewhere, for suggesting that legalization be studied, he called *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen "a little twerp."

THIS MORALIST APPROACH leads Bennett to talk about drugs as if they were a single, unified social ill. But in reality his shorthand refers to a complex of disparate drug problems, which overlap with a number of other societal ills. In the ghettos of America's largest cities, a violent culture related to crack cocaine, and to a lesser extent to heroin and PCP, has exploded in the last five years. This is the most severe drug problem in America: the addiction of an undereducated, unemployable, largely black underclass, which is being pushed further into the abyss. Statistics do not give a clear picture of inner-city addiction, no one knows for sure whether it is now rising or falling. But it clearly has risen over the past several years. The number of people who reported using cocaine "frequently"—defined as once a week or more—was 862,000 in 1988, according to an extrapolation from the household survey carried out by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). But many experts feel that this underestimates crack addiction. A recent report by Eric Wish for the National Institute of Justice concludes that there are 1.3 million additional hardcore addicts, or a total of more than 2 million.

The other major trend of recent years is a *decline* in drug use—a shift away from casual ingestion by nonaddicts. According to the NIDA survey, "current" use of illegal drugs, defined as once a month or more, went down some 37 percent, from 23 million users to 14.5 million between 1985 and 1988. Pot smoking by high school students recently hit a fifteen-year low. The evidence suggests, then, that America faces two entirely separate drug problems. One is a crisis of underclass addiction, which exacts a massive social toll. The other is a diminishing problem of middle-class casual use, the social costs of which are comparatively small. Occasional users of powder cocaine and marijuana sometimes harm themselves and their families—just like alcohol drinkers—but they do little to endanger society as a whole.

For the record, however, Bennett prefers not to divide the problem into categories or to distinguish use from abuse. He goes so far as to link the attitude of the upper classes to the behavior of the underclass. "I know it is fashionable in some circles—primarily among some elites—to wonder how, for example, we can expect any child of the inner city not to succumb to the lure of drugs," he said in a recent speech to the



Houston Area Urban League He blames the Cambridge types for promoting the victim psychology by which the down-and-ourers justify their dereliction. Bennett wants to try punishment as an alternative to sympathy and understanding. This is what he means when he insists, "The casual user is the person driving the whole enterprise."

There is little, however, beyond Bennett's own world view to back this assertion. One recent study shows that middle-class users purchase no more than 15 percent of the cocaine exported to the United States, the remainder consumed by poor, addicted users. There is no justification for saying that stockbrokers who snort coke are killing "thousands of Americans," as Bennett has claimed. Yet, distinguishing among users and substances that are currently illegal is antithetical to Bennett's whole approach. His latest budget, for instance, almost doubles spending on domestic marijuana eradication, to $34 million.

Though hardcore cocaine addiction is unlikely to be significantly reduced by the time Bennett leaves office, the trend away from recreational consumption means that overall drug use will have gone down. By combining the underclass crisis with the diminishing problem of casual use, Bennett will almost unavoidably be able to show progress. Realizing the impossibility of winning the war in the ghetto, he has chosen to emphasize the fight in the suburbs. He has carefully rigged the expectations game in his own favor so that he can declare victory at any point. He has created a drug war he can't lose.

Bennett began laying the groundwork for this "war" in March 1989, with dire pronouncements about the depth of the nation's problem. Success was "not inevitable." It might take fifteen or twenty years to turn the tide against drugs. As late as September of last year, Bennett was still saying, "We are losing—badly." At the same time, he offered his quantified goals, which Congress required when it created his office. He promised a 10-percent reduction in overall drug use over two years, and a 50-percent reduction *in the rate of increase* in frequent cocaine use.

But these modest goals may have been achieved already by the time Bennett was confirmed. The director's reports assert that cocaine addiction doubled during the three-year period between 1985 and 1988, the year before he took office. Even if the rate of addiction goes up another 50 percent by 1991, he will have met his target. And even that may be misleading, because

PRISON WON'T DETER DRUG DEALERS, WHO FACE DEATH IN THEIR WORK EVERY DAY.

Bennett's claim about the doubling in cocaine addiction is suspicious. Professors Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins of the University of California explained in a *New York Times* op-ed piece that the statistics from that period do *not* demonstrate a doubling of hardcore cocaine use. It's a complex point, but Zimring and Hawkins maintain, as the NIDA survey suggests, that while overall cocaine use declined over the period, frequent use held fairly steady. Thus, by 1988, addicts constituted a higher percentage of "the total cocaine-using population." Bennett's office extrapolated the "increase" represented by the 1988 figure of 862,000 addicts. Hence, the doubling. Crack addiction almost certainly *did* increase—but probably didn't double. It's an old statistical trick: inflating the base line. Bennett, the professors argue, did so in an attempt to "manufacture a crisis." In fairness to Bennett, there are no completely reliable statistics on drug use, which is why all sides of the issue tend to manipulate whatever numbers do exist.

Having exaggerated how dire the problem is, he can scale it down anytime he likes. Bennett doesn't seem prepared to wait long. This January he told reporters, "It's becoming clear that the war is winnable.... This is clearly not mission impossible. We're not out of the woods yet, but I think this scourge is beginning to end." Look for more cautious optimism from Bennett over the next few years. Results of the next NIDA household survey are due out in the fall. If they show improvement, they're likely to be released before election day. Otherwise, it's likely that they'll be released afterward.

Just as Bennett has learned to define his goals in a way that virtually guarantees victory, so too has he changed his reputation from the Reagan days, when he was seen as a smart ideologue who was short on political skills.

For instance, at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in February, Bennett momentarily lost his cool when challenged by Ted Kennedy on the question of drug education. "If there were a seminar or course which could inoculate, we would have put it in long ago," he sputtered at the senator. In his office a few days later he reiterated his point. "Seeing a few overheads with some pictures of powder and hearing stories about how it can hurt you isn't going to move a lot of kids," he says. "The problem isn't ignorance." All valid, and brave to say considering that President Bush is on the record in favor of drug-abuse education. But that doesn't mean the drug czar is taking the politically risky step of cutting funds for education, in two years, Bennett has sought and secured an 80-percent increase in federal support for the drug-abuse-education programs he says he doesn't believe in.

Increasing funding for every aspect of the drug war is part and parcel of Bennett's new political strategy. At Education he was forced to justify slashing his own budget while pushing for reform; it made him an easy mark for critics. Now he prides himself on winning across-the-board hikes for every program, regardless of whether he believes it works. He has learned that you cannot go far wrong by flinging a great deal of money at what Americans view, according to polls, as the nation's top domestic problem. Total expenditures on antidrug efforts have skyrocketed by 69 percent since Bush took office. No one will ever be able to say the war on drugs was lost on account of Republican stinginess.

Budget Director Dick Darman, who complains privately that Bennett is throwing money at the problem, remains his most powerful opponent. In the 1991 budget Bennett asked for a 15-percent increase, to $11-plus billion. At a morning meeting in January, Darman told the czar he had already settled on a smaller increase. "Fuck you, Dick," he barked at Darman. "Fuck you, Bill," Darman fired back. Bennett appealed the verdict to Bush, who split the difference between the feuding parties.

By raising spending on his own initiative—and indicating that he tries and fails to be even more freehanded—he deprives congressional Democrats of an issue. Senator Joseph Biden and Congressman Charles Rangel of New York say they want a greater emphasis on treatment and education, less on law enforcement and interdiction. But they do not disagree that vast sums should be spent. "Biden and I now essentially agree," Bennett ventures in a fit of bipartisanship. "We are all now in agreement about the basic things that need to be done. That's progress." More precisely, they are in agreement that it is political suicide to shirk combat. So the Democrats struggle vainly to outbid the Republicans; Biden's latest alternative calls for $4 billion to be spent on top of the administration's proposed $10.6 billion.

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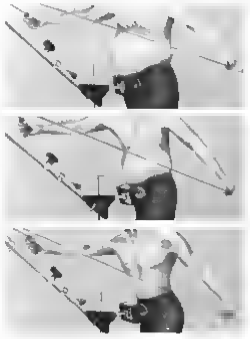
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IF THERE'S A WAR on drugs, Bennett can't lose, it unfortunately remains the case that there's a war America can't win in any decisive sense. Efforts to constrict the importation of drugs have resulted in more seizures and arrests but haven't reduced the overall influx. The State Department reported in March 1989 that opium production was up 47 percent from the previous year, cocaine production up 12 percent. The basic indicators of supply—street price and purity—have been stable, at least until June, when prices rose steeply, indicating a tightening of the market. Some law enforcement officials credit that to temporary changes in the business, a hiccup.

The czar has it right when he charges that the liberal solutions of treatment and education won't solve this problem. They can't. He's made it clear that he won't follow the pro-decriminalization position taken by fellow conservatives like Milton Friedman and William F. Buckley Jr., among others. (His intransigence on that matter is variously credited to stubbornness, his reputation as a good team player, or his presidential ambitions.) But Bennett won't acknowledge that his solution—stepped-up enforcement—promises only marginal gains. Longer prison sentences will not deter dealers, who face the occupational hazard of death every day. Twice the number of prisons now built would not hold a fraction of the users Bennett wants to prosecute. And jail does less to cure addiction than even ineffectual treatment.

He's finding that even the relatively simple task of getting jails built is beyond the power of his pulpit. Soon after his confirmation, in March 1989, he announced an initiative focused on Washington, D.C. This would be a "test case" of the administration's determination, it would show that toughness can make a difference. Before long, though, Bennett was savaging District officials, who were slow about finding locations for a new prison and pretrial detention center. A year after the initiative started, the czar was insisting that the program "was not a failure," despite the fact that there was no new prison, no detention center, and no place for two of the three "model" treatment centers he vowed would be open by 1990. The District's jails were more crowded than ever at 30 percent over capacity, and the murder rate continued to accelerate.

The drug czar's response was to wash his hands of the whole bad business. "We threw a rope to a city drowning, and we found a lot of knots got tied, but there wasn't enough pulling to get up," he said. If these people are too lazy to save themselves, what can you do? If worst comes to worst, Bill Bennett can always tell the rest of the country the same thing. ◘

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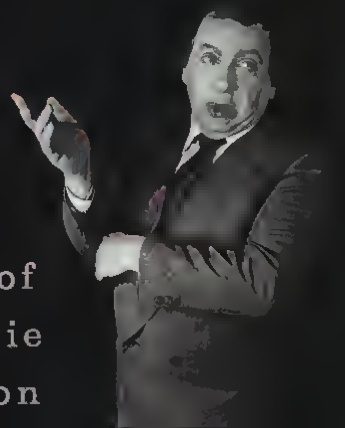
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The rise and fall and rise and fall of Jackie Mason

As the stretch limo barrels through the bleak winter light up Route 17, Jackie Mason knifes SHOW BUSINESS his stubby fingers through the climate-modulated air. "You must be some kind of putz! That is the most idiotic thing I've heard in thirty years!" Jackie assails. "Why do you think if a Jewish girl



has a big nose she immediately cuts it off? An Italian girl or a gentile from Wyoming, if she has a little extra nose, she won't slice it off in a second! You think it's an accident that Jewish girls have more nose jobs?"

"Maybe it's a generational thing," I meekly riposte.

Mason rolls his milk-blue eyes. "One jerk-off remark after another! Oh . . . because you're so *young* and I'm so *old*, I don't know what I'm talking about? Schmuck! My whole life is chasing twenty-five-year-old girls!" Mason appeals to the others in the pseudoplush vehicle. "You! What do you think?" he queries the radio announcer. "How about you?" he polls the squirrelly insurance purveyor. Assent is immediate, unanimous. To banish a Jewish girl from Bloomingdale's makeup counter is tantamount to plunging a nail file into her heart. Jackie is right, I am wrong. Mason raises his puff palms to the ceiling. "See!" Case closed. Then he crams a cracker into his mouth, follows it with a grape, and he's ready for the next topic of discussion.

That's how it is with Jackie. If you are exhibiting putzlike behavior, entertaining a schmuck concept pertaining to, say, the quality of an Italian restaurant or the relative hand speed of certain prizefighters, or—God forbid—revealing the pathetic liberal tendencies of a typical Jew wussy regarding personages like Jesse Jackson, Jackie is more than willing to sever these woeful afflictions from your person with his howitzering wit. He's not crazy about the color of your tie either. He doesn't have to know you very well to dispense these opinions; Jackie's a gnomish *Übermensch*, his commentary is universal, available and applicable to all. Once, he buttonholed Strom Thurmond in the Senate dining room and spared the antique former segregationist no quarter on the subject of "underage women." But Jackie would have done the same to a bum in the street. Populist to the core, he plays no favorites.

The first time you meet him, perhaps backstage, after a show, his shirt off, loose white skin on his tiny, vaguely shaped chest filmed with sweat, Jackie rotates his globular head on an invisible neck, rocks back on his heels, looks you up and down. *Are you for me* or *against me*? is the question. The answer is: Who cares? You can be Jackie's friend for life and he'll still call you up in the middle of the night to tell you what garbage your dreams are.

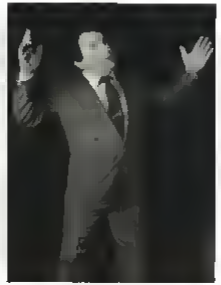
With Jackie, there's always something *mies* going on. A tumult. People he's not talking to. Bridges left burned and blown apart like the one over the River Kwai. Today he's calling one deli owner a "little Hitler" because he wouldn't give him an extra pickle, tomorrow he'll be saying another proprietor is a "Mussolini" because he gave him too many pickles. Forget the third place, he's suing them, or are they suing him? Edgy self-destruction is a recurring theme in Jackie's remarkable career. How many other entertainment figures have managed, within the space of a single decade, to be banished from the big-time airwaves for allegedly giving Ed Sullivan the finger on live national television *and* to be shot at for repeated public razzing of Frank Sinatra, in Vegas no less. In Miami Beach, a large man warned him to lay off Frank, then broke his nose and crushed his cheekbones. But did that stop Jackie from claiming, in his act, that Ol' Blue Eyes put his teeth in a glass before he mounted Mia Farrow? You don't know Jackie.

That Jackie! Can't accuse him of ducking anyone. Fools may rush in, but they eat Jackie's dust. He's around sixty now, but time hasn't dulled his boyish impulsiveness one bit. This fact was made clear in the 1989 New York mayoral election. Suddenly back from show-biz oblivion, a homegrown Prince of the City due to his Tony Award–winning one-man show, *The World According to Me*—which he will reprise in October as *Jackie Mason: Brand New*—Jackie proceeded to embroil himself in much *tsores*. Acting as Republican Rudolph Giuliani's "honorary campaign manager," he was quoted as calling eventual winner David Dinkins, who is black, "a fancy *schvartzer* with a moustache." Closely following the racially motivated murder of a black teenager in the nearly all-white section of Bensonhurst, *l'affaire du schvartzer* dominated the tabloid pages for weeks, sparking much contention, scholarly and otherwise, as to the exact connotation of the Yiddish word (which means, literally, *black*, but is often used in a far more pejorative sense). Under fire, Giuliani, a stern but tongue-tied former D.A., who courted jocular Jackie in hopes of winning the pivotal Jewish voting block, unceremoniously jettisoned the comic from his campaign.









Though fools may rush in, they eat Jackie Mason's dust.

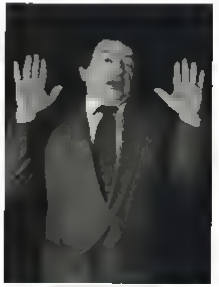
Mark Jacobson *is a frequent contributor to* Esquire. *His novel,* Gojiro, *will be published by the Atlantic Monthly Press.*

JAMES HAMILTON

Several weeks after this episode, Jackie's TV show, *Chicken Soup*, his supposed "breakthrough" into every gentile's living room, was canceled. Did the *schvartzer* business kill the program? Inquiring minds wanted to know. To paraphrase the old Yiddish joke, it didn't help. But really, the show was a turkey. Incongruously paired opposite the bulky British earth mother Lynn Redgrave, Jackie tried to affect a schmaltz-dripped Mr. Rogers, all the while kvetching he "hated every moment" of his supposed "breakthrough," that working on the series was like "being in a gulag."

"NO-GOOD NAZI BASTARDS!" Jackie Mason blurts, nonsequiturously, as the limo whizzes past familiar signposts: LIBERTY. MONTICELLO. SOUTH FALLSBURG. We're headed for the Pines Hotel. Not too long ago, along with Grossinger's, the Concord, the Nevele, and dozens of others, the Pines was one of the top-line Alhambras of the Borscht Belt, that idyll-with-pastrami summer world that city-ehoked Jews built ninety miles from New York, in the Catskill Mountains. Now, however, Grossinger's is gone, bulldozed for condos. Many others met similar fates. To make it these days, several of the remaining Catskill hotels try to represent themselves as swinging-singles spots, using ads with blond (gentile) bathing beauties as come-ons.

As he will, Jackie blames his coreligionists for the demise of "the mountains." "They think of the Catskills and go 'Too Jewish.' So they say there's nothing to do there. They go to an island instead. 'I went to an island,' they brag, 'it was so wonderful, there was *nothing* to do.' In the mountains nothing is a calamity, but on an island it's paradise." Then, with an unexpected exhale of resignation, Jackie looks out the tinted window. It's "off-season," true, but South Fallsburg has the mournful look of one of those towns forgotten now that it's moved off the main road. "What a dump this place has become," Jackie reflects.



When he first started as a comic back in the late 1950s, Jackie spent summers in "the Jewish Alps," doing his fledgling act amid indifferent suites as "social director," a thankless task he describes as "trying to get Jews out of lawn chairs, an impossibility." Then, later, after the Sullivan "finger" incident, when mainstream club bookers and television producers wouldn't touch him due to his reputation as "a filthy comic," Mason returned. In the goyim inflected world of the cathode ray, he was an outcast, a pariah. But in "the mountains," he was welcome. He played everywhere. Jews would always laugh at his famous routines, like the one about the doctors ("Crooks, every last one of them! If they're not, why are they wearing a mask? And gloves? To hide the fingerprints! You ever wonder why you can't read the prescriptions? It's a code, for the pharmacist. It says, 'I got my money, you get *yours*!'"). When he said his family was wrecked in the stock-market crash—"A broker jumped out the window, fell on my father's pushcart"—he got howls.





As the limo pulls into the Pines driveway, there's a stir. Maybe the hotel isn't what it used to be, maybe the legendarily copious food now tastes as if it were hijacked from a dozen airplanes, and the "nightclub" looks like a tatty high school auditorium done up for a Las Vegas night, none of that matters.

Tonight there's an electricity, like the time Eddie Fisher first came up onstage, or Jerry Lewis, or a hundred others nervy enough to push themselves to the front of the line and say, "Look at me, not him!" Tonight you could close your eyes and believe you saw Marjorie Morningstar flit across the linoleum dance floor. Tonight is special. Jackie Mason is headlining!

And they come, the "regulars," faces from a hundred bar mitzvahs, from a thousand photos snapped on Grand Concourse, or in Brooklyn, on Eastern Parkway, before those great boulevards "changed" and people speaking Spanish and playing loud radios took over the lobbies and subway stations. A liver marked man wearing white shoes says he met Jackie in Atlantic City, a red-rinsed lady remembers him from Eden Roc in Miami. "I saw your act at the Concord before you were anyone," says one person. "I saw you at Grossinger's even before that," another one injects in the spirit of vicious one-upmanship. "At Raleigh's in 1965!" "In Chicago in 1977!" Then come the pictures. Children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren are pushed under Jackie's bulbous nose.

"Never fails," Jackie grouches, later, about the picture pushers. "They're on me, like a pogrom. Do they think I want to look at the two-year-old kid, naked, upside down on a rug? Who is this two year old to me? You got a picture of an eighteen year-old girl, show me that!" But Jackie doesn't say that to the picture pushers. He smiles, signs autographs, chats, *tumles*. Suddenly there's another Jackie, a gracious, accommodating man emerging from beneath the bluster. It is not an act. True, Jackie remains ready to attack at any moment, tell anyone they are a putz, a moron, a scumbag. But not these people. These people love Jackie Mason. And, down deep, he loves them. After all, he eats what they eat, remembers what they remember, thinks what they think. And they're happy he's here, because now, at least for tonight, things will be as they once were.

(continued on page 222)

Take away the Joke and Jackie ceases to exist.

JAMES HAMILTON



Slate-gray wool-blend overcoat, with soft shoulders, and leather gloves by Giorgio Armani

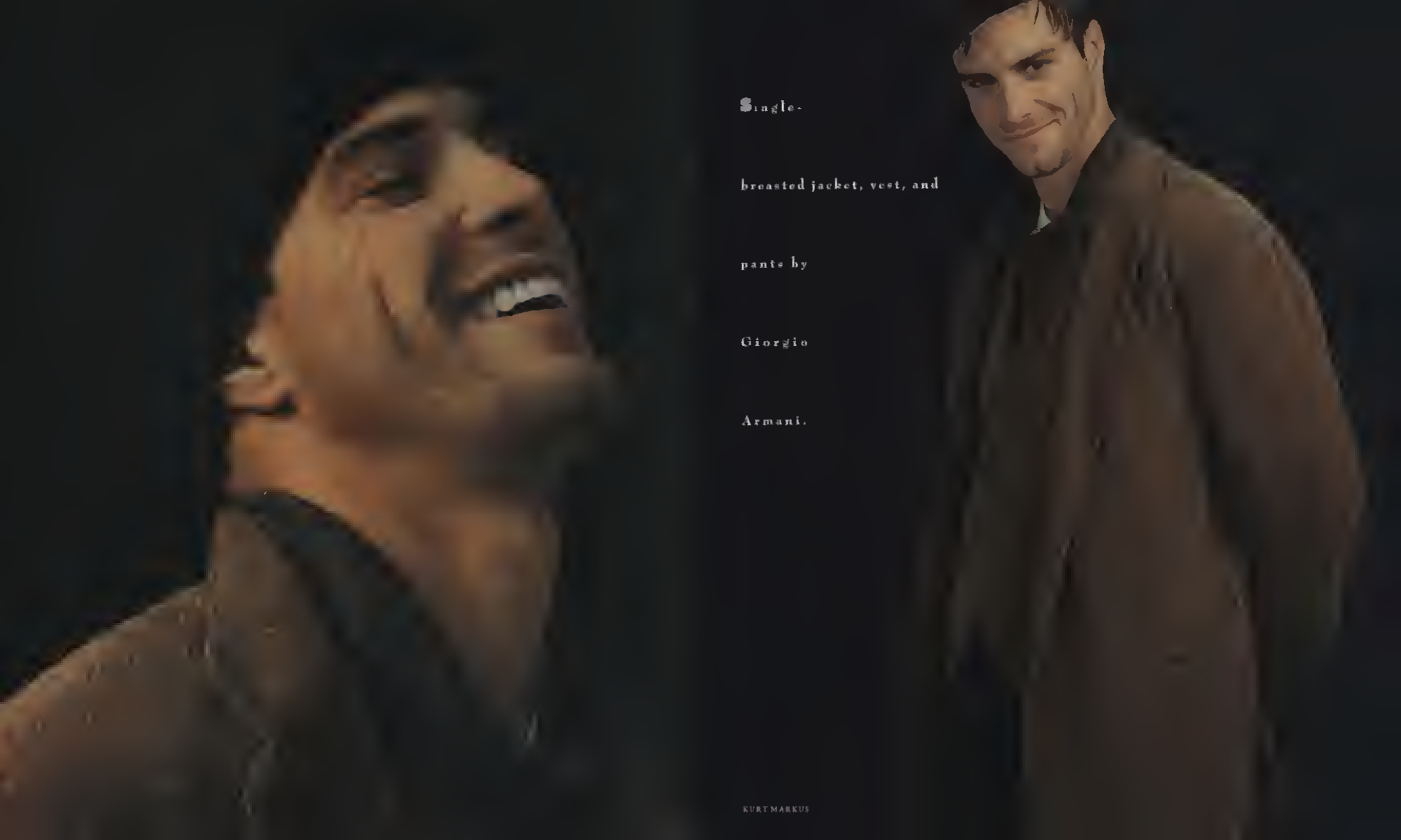
The decade of the power suit has given way to a more comfortable alternative

Make Room for Armani



Steel-gray suit with low-set buttons combines the look of the British drape with a relaxed American fit. Suit, shirt, belt, hat, and shoes by Giorgio Armani.

KURT MARKUS



Single-

breasted jacket, vest, and

pants by

Giorgio

Armani.

KURT MARKUS



khaki corduroy shirt, as soft as your favorite weekend shirt, corduroy pants, vest, and belt by Giorgio Armani

KURT MARKUS



gray shawl-collar double-breasted suit, brown angora shirt, and leather gloves by Giorgio Armani.

Khaki-green wool coat with fake-fur lining, an updated version of the 1940s car coat, and shirt by Giorgio Armani.



Plush fake-fur trench coat, cotton shirt, and leather gloves by Giorgio Armani.

For store information see page 230.



HOW TO BEAT JAPAN AT ITS OWN GAME

With American-Japanese trade relations what they are, maybe it's time for Konishiki lessons. At twenty-six, the Hawaiian-born hulk has risen to sumo wrestling's second-highest rank, *ozeki*, or champion. This is a sport, mind you, in which foreigners are simply not welcome (not that many are clamoring to get in). When he first hit the sumo scene in 1984, purists called for banning foreigners, to prevent him from reaching the top. But Konishiki persevered, showing them he could win and still be as American as Mom, lots of apple pie, and a little bit of sushi. So pay attention, Yanks.

One little American's training secrets

AMERICAN ORIGINALS

BRIAN SMALE

Do as You're Told

"You shower last. You eat last. You cook the meals. You're at the bottom until you become something."

Always Be Polite

"Sometimes when you're starting out they whack you in the head with a bottle, and you have to say, 'Thank you.'"

Eat Well-Balanced Meals

Konishiki once ballooned to 535 pounds and had to take off some weight. He lost 60 pounds. "I've learned a lot about dieting." A steady intake of *chanko-nabe*, a sugar-laced stew, and fermented-bean paste is recommended.

Smile

"I still tell people to shut up, but I say it differently. I say it with a smile."

Hit People

"If guys turn on you, take it out in practice. Hit me now, I'll get you in practice."

Be Tough with Yourself

"Sumo is so simple. It's just winning or losing. If you lose, you've got nobody to blame." Once, after a hard loss, Konishiki threw a television set out a window.

Remember, Winning Isn't Everything

When Konishiki arrived in the Orient, they called him names like "Meat Bomb." Then he began to lose to smaller men, and the public no longer feared him. "I had to fight for their respect." He did, and he won.

Now it's Meat Bomb-san.



WATERCOLOR BY ANTHONY RUSSO

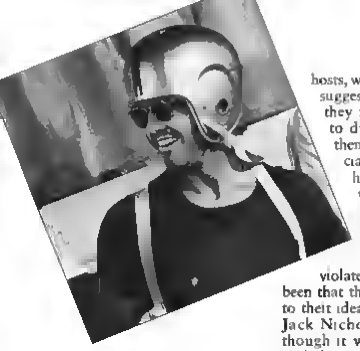
THE MYTH THAT JACK BUILT

THE AMERICAN REBEL SERIES

By Steve Erickson

He was so great in our rebellious fantasies that we made him the star of our decadence

One night not so long ago in Hollywood, a married couple were visited at their home by a friend, who had brought with him Jack Nicholson. The couple had never met Nicholson before. Once in the house, Nicholson went into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator, took out a bottle of champagne the couple had received as an anniversary present, returned to the living room, and popped the champagne open. He drank it down before his startled



THE BIRTH OF COOL: JACK RUNS FOR DAYLIGHT IN *EASY RIDER* (1969).

IS JACK Nicholson, Cheshire smirk and all, the most depraved man in movies?

hosts, who apparently did not suggest to Nicholson that they might have preferred to drink the champagne themselves on some special occasion. It might have been the couple were too polite or intimidated, or that they were in some way even perversely honored to be thus violated. It might also have been that the episode conformed to their idea of the sort of thing Jack Nicholson would do, as though it were a scene from a Nicholson movie. Most unnerving of all, the couple might have understood, even if they could not have put it into words, that Nicholson was just keeping his end of the bargain.

The night before I heard this story, Jack Nicholson was keeping the evening of the Academy Awards ceremony, and I was with a group of people in Los Angeles, watching it on television. Hour after hour as the awards were handed out, the people in the room where I was watching got sutlier and sutlier. Their remarks were directed not at the prizes themselves, which even in Los Angeles most people do not take particularly seriously, with the exception of those for whom it's their business to, but rather at the way the movie stars were so unrelentingly dull and graceless, when long ago we entered into a conspiracy to make them otherwise. Only at the end did one of them, by his sheer presence, manage to preserve the myth we'd created with him. Presenting the Best Picture award with his longtime friend Warren Beatty, Nicholson was the very picture of dissipation, his hands in his pockets and a familiar Cheshire smirk on his face that professed not to give a damn about any of this foolishness. In the moment of silence intended to provide suspense, someone among my group asked, "Is this the most depraved man in Hollywood?"

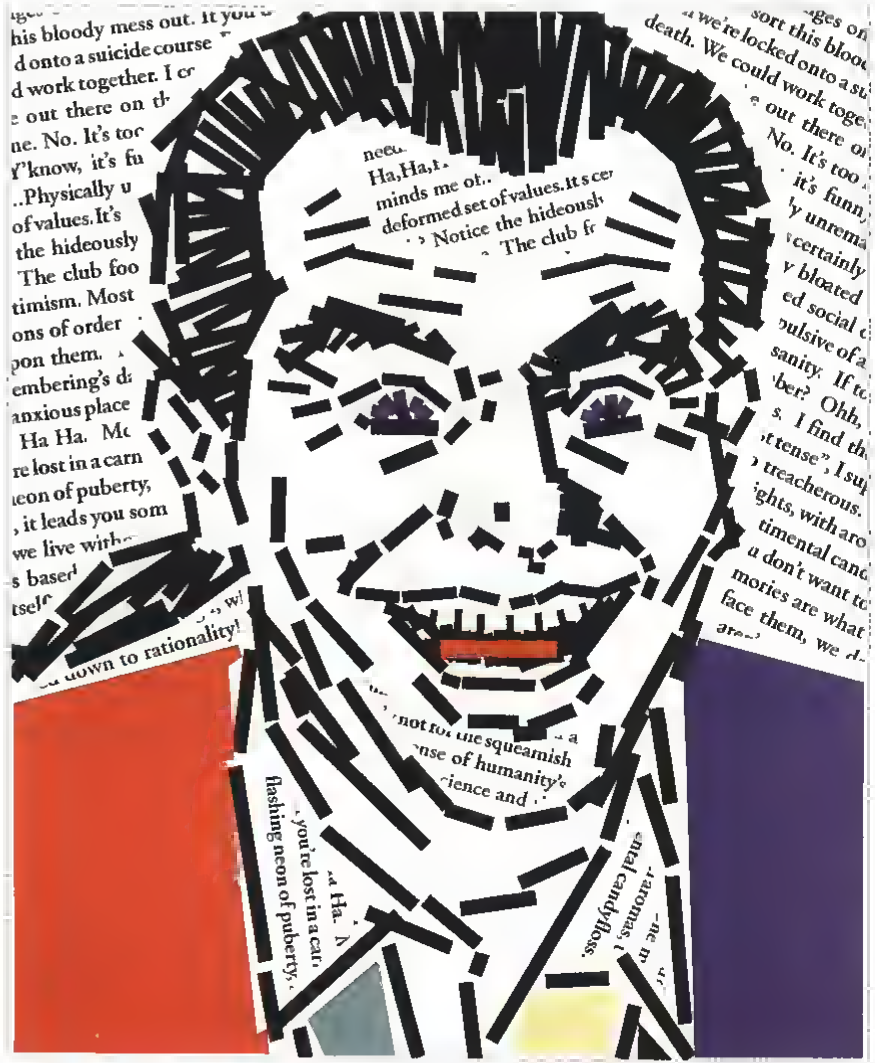
This story, however, is not about the answer to that question. This story is about the question, because for the next few days and weeks after the awards I heard it from everyone. It took different forms; sometimes it didn't even have a question mark after it. I heard people who once liked Jack Nicholson say they didn't much anymore; he seems to have lost his symbolic force for a lot of people. Some of them don't even sound too sure how seriously they still take him as an artist, his new film, *The Two Jakes*, may or may not resolve that. It may be that this question simply has to do with the quicksilver nature of the public's affection, to which Nicholson has laid claim for twenty years; his last and most popular film, *Batman*, may or may not refute that. In a strange way, the fact that he kept his part of the bargain at the Oscars, living up to exactly who we've always thought he was, may have been the slap of recognition we finally couldn't stand.

So this story's about me and you, particularly if you're somewhere between thirty and fifty. This story is about the Nicholson mythos we created with him. It's a myth that's singular for reasons having to do with the man himself, with the generation that made him a star, and with the calendar of American pop history, in the context of which both his timing and ours couldn't have been more uncanny. Nicholson himself would appreciate this notion. "The actor," he told *The New York Times* a few years ago, "is the *littérateur* of his era," meaning he's able to shape the inner history of his age through his choice of roles and how he plays them. If this sounds like the sort of self-importance the mythic Nicholson would laugh at, it also sounds like Nicholson the failed writer talking, the Nicholson who'd just about given up acting in the late Sixties to write and direct—at which point he became, by accident, a star. But this story's not about the man who is or isn't the most depraved in Hollywood. It's about the blueprint of a myth and why what we built from it now crumbles.

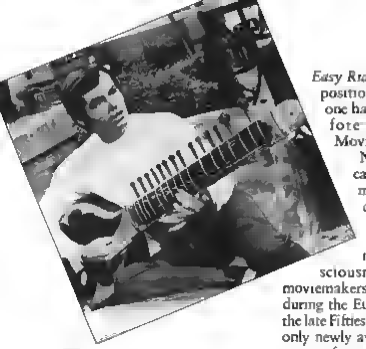
In the 1969 film *Easy Rider*, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper invade a small southern town's parade on their motorcycles; they're surprised and indignant when this indiscretion lands them in jail. Sharing the same cell is an unconscious ACLU lawyer sleeping off another Saturday night drunk. Waking blearily and pushing himself up from the cot, Jack Nicholson speaks his first lines as a major actor: "Oh no, what did I do now? What am I gonna do now?" In fact, Nicholson's lawyer is going to do just what he's done a hundred other Sunday mornings: Get out of jail. But this time he's also going to take a drink, squawk like a chicken, put on a football helmet and climb onto the back of Fonda's motorcycle, learn that marijuana does not necessarily lead to harder stuff, expound in a stoned reverie on the existence of flying saucers and aliens who live among us "in all walks of life," and finally tell Hopper one night by the campfire that there are people who will "talk to you and talk to you about individual freedom, but they see a free individual, it scares them." A few minutes later, some of the people the three easy riders have scared murder Nicholson in his sleep.

Nicholson's performance doesn't last more than fifteen minutes in the picture, and while it won him his first Academy Award nomination, it's not great acting, he's hammy, and more often than not appears to be winging it. But in a hugely influential film in which everyone appears to be winging it, Nicholson does so with more style and inspiration than anyone else; more than this, he's the movie's Trojan horse: the straight American within whom hides the voice of the counterculture, waiting for nightfall to come. That Nicholson is martyred when that voice does come out only seemed to verify to movie audiences the truth of what he says, and for a lot of the generation that made up the audience of *Easy Rider*—I was nineteen at the time—the truth of what he says verified Nicholson's metamorphosis as both a character in the movie and an actor. The rebellion that had characterized Nicholson's marginal movie persona throughout the previous ten years, in a string of biker and horror movies, now took on larger philosophical implications, not to mention political ones

Steve Erickson is *a writer living in Los Angeles. His most recent novel is* Tours of the Black Clock *(Poseidon Press).*



COLLAGE BY JOHN VAN HAMERSVELD



FROM RAGA TO RICHES: *ON A CLEAR DAY YOU CAN SEE FOREVER* (1970).

JACK FELL into a role no one had ever filled: Counter-culture Movie Star.

Easy Rider also put him in a position to play a role no one had ever quite filled before: Counterculture Movie Star.

No one had filled it because neither American movies nor the American counterculture had ever met at this crossroads of commerce or self-consciousness. The American moviemakers who'd come of age during the European new wave in the late Fifties and early Sixties were only newly aware of how the language of movies and the language of upheaval could be the same. The American counterculture, having failed to identify itself in time to claim Brando (whose reputation was in tatters by 1970), Clift (whose face was in tatters by 1960), Dean and Monroe (whose ultimate acts of rebellion were their deaths), heard the control of its language captured by rock 'n' roll stars redefining both culture and stardom. And while both the movies and the counterculture would have been loath to admit it, it was television that dealt the most revolutionary blow of all. TV democratized fame to a point where everyone could have it, or believed they could. If fame was a work of art unto itself, then it was in the movies that fame art attained its greatest incandescence, in part because of the very physical qualities of the movies—the light and largeness—and also because the fame of even those stars whose fame was their greatest creation was made from some mix of talent and personality and shrewdness and perhaps even moral authority. With television, on the other hand, fame was seen and accepted by the public as a commodity entirely removed from anything that had to do with talent or personality. Ed Sullivan was an early example, Pat Sajak a more recent one. It wasn't quite true that everyone became famous for fifteen minutes. Rather, everyone became familiar for fifteen minutes.

The public did understand the distinction, however. TV stars did not make it as movie stars, and in the television era, the real masterpieces of fame-art were created by pop geniuses. Which is to say that while Elvis Presley in one way could never be as grand as Clark Gable in *Gone with the Wind*, in another way he became far grander. And so something odd happened. Television stormed the very idea of fame like a mob taking the Bastille. The media exploded the public limits of self invention, and the very word *fame* became the title of TV shows and movies and songs and magazines. In the wake of all this, serious movie actors decided they could choose to invent their art or themselves, but not both. Once Tracy and Hepburn and Fonda and Stewart and Davis could be both great actors and great stars—more than that, they could hardly avoid it—the inventions of their roles and selves joined like Siamese twins at the heart. But for the movie actors of the television and rock 'n' roll age, one invention threatened the life of the other. Out of its professed political disdain of stardom, and the unspoken usurpation of fame's possibilities by rock 'n' roll spokesmen, the counterculture produced major American film actors (Dustin Hoffman), but not movie stars. Not, at least, until Jack Nicholson.

First by fluke, then perhaps by design, Nicholson invented both his roles and his "self" at the same time. He did it through the traditional collusion between performance and persona that only the movies make possible in so Olympian a fashion. His movie-art became inseparable from his fame-art, and both became huge. "There's James Cagney, Spencer Tracy, Humphrey Bogart, and Henry Fonda," director Mike Nichols was to say. "After that, who is there but Jack Nicholson?"

There was a great paradox in this from the first, however—a secret, chaotic, revolving wall built into the blueprint. The counterculture meant to subvert such myths. The rock 'n' roll stars of that culture presented themselves as naked of marketable mythology, suggesting outright that their music was, among other things, an assault on the bullshit of movie stardom. Another twenty years of watching Mick Jagger would reveal that this was its own kind of bullshit, but that's the way cultural revolutions are made, before the revelation sets in and we have to acknowledge what we've secretly anticipated all along. The important American film actors that emerged as peers of Jack Nicholson's—Hoffman, Hackman, Pacino, DeNiro—willfully bled their performances dry of persona, while Nicholson used his persona to embody the anti-mythos of his time more vividly than anyone else.

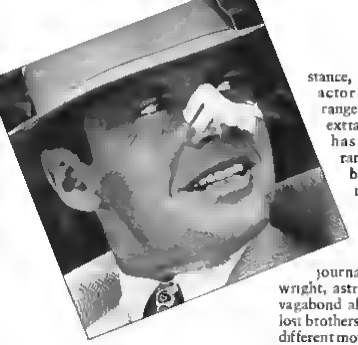
At the same time, his stardom had more of a mythic dimension than any American actor's since Brando or perhaps Bogart, with both of whom he shared an outlaw's attitude and a contempt for anyone trying to sell him a bill of goods. "Give me some more advice on the good life," Nicholson sneers angrily to his oil-rigging partner in *Five Easy Pieces*, "because it makes me want to puke." It's a line not dissimilar in tone and cynicism to Bogart's "I stick my neck out for no one," or Brando's famous answer, when asked exactly what he's rebelling against, "What have you got?" In tune with his times, Nicholson created his stardom by cross-circuiting old-fashioned movie chemistry with a rock 'n' roll sensibility; the end result was a work of fame-art that came to exist for the public beyond and apart from the movie-art, in somewhat the same fashion as Bogart if not quite to the extreme extent of, say, John Wayne.

This is where you and I come in. Because we're collaborators on this piece of fame-art, as we've always been, back to the days of that most spectacular work of fame-art, Jesus, up through somewhat less riveting but nonetheless impressive creations like Lincoln and Hitler. The collaboration began—in the manner of much art, accidentally and with some giddiness—with the lawyer *Easy Rider*, a role Nicholson was never meant to play until the last minute, when the original actor, Rip Torn, walked off the picture. This serendipitous burst became dedicated effort with *Five Easy Pieces*. The dedicated effort led to the creation of the Great Jack Nicholson Myth, in the process of which we concocted some smaller, more harmless myths.

We created the small myth, for in



PAINTING BY TERRY ALLEN



A SLICE OF LEERING GENIUS: AS PRIVATE EYE JAKE GITTES IN *CHINATOWN* (1974).

stance, that Nicholson is an actor of extraordinary range. He's not an actor of extraordinary range. He has portrayed a wide range of character types, but that's not the same thing. Place them side by side and Nicholson's lawyer, pianist, accountant, sailor, private eye, journalist, novelist, playwright, astronaut, hit man, and vagabond all strike you as long-lost brothers of the same father, if different mothers. This isn't to say that much of this work, particularly from 1970 to 1975, isn't fine. All of it has star quality, and at Nicholson's best, as Jake Gittes in *Chinatown*, the balance between actor and star is perfect. But even in first-rate performances, even as early as *Five Easy Pieces*, the persona intimidated the role. Truthfully, did you really buy him as a classical pianist?

We created the small myth that Nicholson is a brave actor. He played a stupid man, after all, in *Prizzi's Honor*; it was brave of him to do that, we reasoned, because he'd always been too smart to ever play someone stupid before. Not discounting that Nicholson may have made some occasionally risky role choices—on the very cusp of superstardom, in 1971, he played a character in *Carnal Knowledge* so completely unpleasant it might have jettisoned his popularity right then—it's nonetheless rather an overstatement to suggest the man was brave because he was fat in a scene with Shirley MacLaine. Any number of heroes might be persuaded by two or three million dollars to be fat, DeNiro did it for less, and a lot of people do it for free. The larger point seems to be that his "risky" role choices have almost always aligned Nicholson with famous directors (Nichols, Polanski, Antonioni, Forman, Kazan, Kubrick), famous leading ladies (Dunaway, MacLaine, Turner, Streep), famous friends and quasi-family (Beatty, the Hustons), and famous paychecks (*Batman*).

But these are only the smaller components of the Great Jack Nicholson Myth, the myth for which we created him in the first place. This is the myth of Nicholson the Mad American Rebel. As McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Nicholson is told by the head of the asylum where he's been committed that he can watch the World Series on TV if the other patients vote for it. The nurse, as a matter of fact, doesn't really want the patients watching the Series, because it will disrupt her control of them. Rushing frantically through the ward from one patient to the next, half of them lost in their own worlds and the other half too spineless to take on the authority of the institution, Nicholson campaigns until the last crucial hand is raised in his favor—only to be informed by the nurse that, basically, the polls have already closed. The scene has American Metaphor written all over it. American Due Process—democracy—engaged in the pursuit of the Great American Pastime—baseball—with the deciding vote cast by a character called Chief—a Native American. A voice on the radio even announces the great American matchup, the Dodgers and the Yankees, in the year 1963, when, only weeks away, John Kennedy's assassination will change America forever. Thwarted by a cold and capricious authority that serves only itself, Nicholson sits sullenly, smoldering before a blank, mute television set, and he gets an idea. With mounting excitement, he looks up at the screen and begins calling the play-by-play of a game that isn't there, until the entire ward is caught up in it and authority's control has been disrupted anyway. Here the rage that Nicholson had modulated in role after role for six years between seething and eruption became, finally, a celebration.

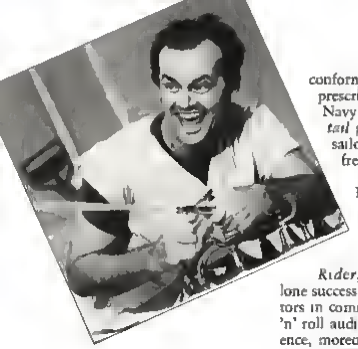
This was the Nicholson you did buy, in a part you couldn't imagine anyone else playing. It was also the moment in his career as an actor when movie-art and fame-art, drawn into the pinpoint gravity of a collapsed star, became so inseparable they could do nothing but separate. It was the moment when Nicholson's persona began to devour his art, when the embodiment of Sixties anti-mythos began to give way to the embodiment of Eighties ego.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SCENE of Jack Nicholson's career came halfway through the picture that made him a Hollywood leading man. The year was 1970, the film was *Five Easy Pieces*, and the scene was Nicholson trying to get a side order of toast in a roadside diner. Informed by an imperial waitress that the restaurant doesn't serve side orders of toast, Nicholson elaborately requests a chicken-salad sandwich on whole-wheat toast without the chicken salad. "And," he explains, "you won't have broken any rules." Moments later his frustration explodes, and in a rage he sweeps the tabletop clean of everything on it. "That was fantastic!" one of Nicholson's passengers exults in the car afterward. "I didn't get it, did I?" Nicholson answers.

WE ARE all collaborators on this piece of fame-art that is Nicholson.

This scene should have elicited a lot of complicated reactions among those who saw it, but the times didn't really allow for such complications. Rather, the times were arrogant with a righteousness that bordered on the totalitarian. The year of *Five Easy Pieces* in particular—when four students were shot by National Guardsmen on the campus of Kent State University in Ohio—tested America's disdain for moral self-doubt, and the next twenty years of national history were about flirtations with doubt and new resolutions that doubt was not only weak but probably unpatriotic. The American psyche of 1970 seemed split between those who hated and loved America simply—those who questioned everything about it, even what was good and reasonable, and those who served its authority and rules so blindly that not only their imaginations but their common sense became paralyzed. Role and persona, movie-art and fame-art, met on the common ground of this particular scene and cooked up Nicholson the Mad American Rebel, in the climate of the Sixties and Seventies, it didn't really matter whether *mad* meant angry or crazy. Virtually all of Nicholson's important roles leading up to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* reinforced this image. All of them involved characters who wouldn't





WITH RANDALL P. MCMURPHY, NICHOLSON'S PERSONA BEGAN TO DEVOUR HIS ART (1975).

THE '80S made it clear that Nicholson's rebellion was without a moral center.

conform to what the System prescribed—even the career Navy man in *The Last Detail* giving a brig-bound sailor his last weekend of freedom.

This, and the fact of Nicholson's first real exposure to the mass public in what became a counterculture landmark, *Easy Rider*, accounted for his lone success among American actors in communicating to a rock 'n' roll audience. It was an audience, moreover, that was hip to the possibilities of movies even as the movies had been subconsciously hip to the audience. "As music, rock 'n' roll would have taken shape without them," Greil Marcus would write later about Marlon Brando and James Dean, "as culture, it very well may not have." Nicholson wasn't unaware of this, even when it was far from clear how he might fit into the equation. In 1966 he wrote a psychedelic movie called *The Trip*, in 1968 he co-wrote and coproduced *Head* for the Monkees. In 1969, as an actor, he would take the connection even further.

In the twenty years that followed, it was a connection he maintained. This may have been out of genuine personal enthusiasm rather than cynical opportunism. The first time I actually saw Nicholson in person was at the closed screening of a Neil Young concert movie ten years ago. He walked in only moments before the picture began and sat near the back of the room; he was about the only movie star who would not have seemed out of place. He and Young briefly shook hands, rebel to rebel. Five years later, Nicholson and I were in the same row at a Eurythmics show; he was a few seats away. This time he did seem slightly out of place—though, given the Eurythmics, that was probably to his credit. It was a summer night and the show was outdoors, and Nicholson was wearing a stylishly large suit. During one of the final numbers, he did an impression of a clapping seal for the woman I was with, she was enormously amused. The next year, at the Live Aid concert benefiting starving people in Africa, Nicholson was a master of ceremonies and seemed more out of place yet, though probably no other Hollywood star could have done it without getting booed off the stage. What made him seem incongruous, though, wasn't simply that he was a Hollywood movie star. What made him incongruous was that, in the utopian context of Live Aid, and from the retrospective vantage point of the Eighties, it was just becoming clear that Nicholson's rebellion has been an empty one.

Like the issue of artistic courage, first of all, the image is at odds with the facts. "Nicholson a rebel?" novelist and screenwriter Michael Ventura said to me recently. "Give me a break. You want a rebel in the Hollywood system? Clint Eastwood is ten times the rebel Nicholson is. Nicholson *is* the Hollywood system." But more than this, the rebellion that Nicholson represents is one without moral center.

In *Five Easy Pieces*, he bullies a waitress over a piece of toast. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, his targets are the nurses and janitors trying to keep the lid on a mental ward. In *Chinatown*, he ridicules an acne-tortured library clerk while ripping pages out of a reference book.

In other words, Nicholson's rebellion hasn't been against the System, or against those who push its buttons. It's been against the System's flunkies. It's been against the Squares, the young married couple so awestruck by him that he could drink their anniversary champagne. It's been a demonstration of contempt by the Hip for those too ugly or frightened or already beaten down by the System not to be unhip. As the emptiness of his rebellion makes him seem out of place at rock benefits, the image of his rebellion—born the same year as rock's metaphorical apotheosis (Woodstock) and nadir (Altamont)—has reflected the worst impulses of the music rather than the best. When rock 'n' roll became introspective in the period of Nicholson's ascent as a star, when as punk it became raw and vital in a way even the counterculture couldn't tolerate during Nicholson's late-Seventies eclipse, when it absorbed the flashy sensationalism of the "new wave" as it discarded what was unsettling about punk in the early Eighties, when Nicholson achieved popularity again, the rebel image was one of self-absorption rather than self-reflection, nihilism rather than idealism, slickness rather than commitment.

The Devil from *The Witches of Eastwick* and the Joker from *Batman* are the Heavy Metal Nicholson. They're the ultimate Mad Rebels, with their rebellion taken to its ultimate end: narcissism. Some have called the Joker the ultimate Jack Nicholson performance; his casting seemed obvious the moment that it was announced. If *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was one culmination of Nicholson's developing mythos, *Batman* was the other, it's a bit unfair to complain that Nicholson's performance is a grotesque vaudevillian turn, because it's clearly the performance the director of the picture had in mind when he cast Nicholson in the first place. More than that, it's exactly the kind of performance anyone would have expected of Nicholson, and that all of us wanted from him. It was a command performance, demanded by a counterculture that had grown up to become mainstream culture and to swallow whatever obstinate part of itself was left to be swallowed. It was also the ultimate statement of a prevailing Eighties ethic that valued energy over deliberation, attainment over sacrifice, bluster over doubt.

AT ODDS WITH THAT ETHIC were three of Nicholson's own performances in the Eighties, all of them—not coincidentally—confirmation of what an excellent actor he still can be. They shared a heroism that's not only existential ("The actor," Nicholson has said, "is Camus's ideal existential hero") but traditional. As Eugene O'Neill in *Reds*, Nicholson risked everything to declare his passion for Diane Keaton. As the vagrant Francis Phelan in *Ironweed*, he subjected himself, haunted and vulnerable, to the wrath of the daughter he abandoned. As the incorruptible patrol-

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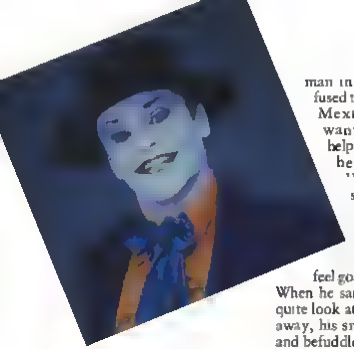
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IS THE JOKE ON JACK? A PARODY OF HIMSELF IN THE CARTOONISH *BATMAN* (1989).

AT THE Oscars, the look in his satyr eyes betrayed a man who could not keep from laughing.

man in *The Border*, he refused the body of a beautiful Mexican woman who wanted to pay him for helping her to try to find her abducted baby. "You don't understand," he told her in an English she literally didn't understand. "Just once," he said, "I'd like to feel good about something." When he said it he could neither quite look at her nor take his eyes away, his smile was both beatific and befuddled by his own refusal.

What's important about these three roles and performances is that they seemed to have no resonance with the Eighties audience at all. Their heroism, essentially selfless, was anomalous in an age when our national leaders implicitly suggested that selflessness and sacrifice and self-denial were for suckers and bleeding hearts and troublemakers. For Nicholson, this heroism actually seemed square. Otherwise, in a decade that's really loathed rebellion, Nicholson's been observant and intuitive enough to see that every contrary social spasm the culture couldn't repress or assimilate instead found its outlet in the manifestations of style. By stylizing rebellion, by insisting that rebellion be confined to gestures of style, we made it a commodity in the Eighties just as we made fame a commodity in the Fifties. When rebellion threatened to express itself in ways more profound than fashion or a new dance, two things happened. First, we began yanking it off museum walls and record shelves. Second, we transformed rebellion into an icon of power and authority.

Once, the American rebel was portrayed as the Underdog. He or she was on the bottom rung, economically and socially and politically. He spoke, perhaps a bit rhapsodically but nonetheless sincerely, the language of the People in *The Grapes of Wrath*. By the Sixties, the American rebel was the Middle Dog. He or she was the child of a white middle-class family, sometimes courageous enough to travel into the segregated South and work for integration or civil rights, but more often framing rebellion in terms of illicit chemicals that might be ingested or the biological and moral freedom to have sex, or protesting an Asian war until the government stopped drafting the children of white middle-class families and satisfied itself with sending poor black kids to mop up. For all its self-righteousness, the rebellion of the Sixties, even as it was often dedicated to right ends, was self-serving in the most immediate and individual sense. The Sixties did not die with the Eighties, as so many contended; the evolution of American rebellion did not stop. It continued. The American rebel, having gone from Underdog to Middle Dog, went on from Middle Dog to become Top Dog. He became the Wall Street high roller playing fast and loose with other people's money, the televangelist manipulating people's spiritual hunger for his own profit and power, the "antiestablishment" President cutting in half the taxes of the rich while devastating the hopes of the poor and desperate. In the performance with which he ushered in the Eighties, Nicholson's American rebel got *really* mad and set out after his defenseless wife and child with an ax in an old, isolated hotel. In the performance with which he ushered out the Eighties, he vandalized a museum, threw a lot of free cash to the rabble in the streets of Gotham City—and then blew that rabble away.

It was, of course, Jack Nicholson himself who claimed a special responsibility as the actor of his time; it was Nicholson himself who said the actor, through the roles he chooses and the way he plays them, shapes the inner history of his age. At the end of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, in the dead of the night and the still of the asylum, the Indian called Chief takes a pillow and smothers a lobotomized Nicholson, so the death of the body might approximate the death of the soul. This was the rebellion of the Sixties given its final romantic flourish, and for some years afterward, Nicholson's career seemed dead itself, a string of failed movies in which he was sometimes interesting, and an attempt at directing that didn't take. He resurfaced to seize the public's imagination again with a series of variations on the rebel as Top Dog, for whom the death of the soul is easily overcome by a sheer mania of personality that passes itself off as identity.



Jack Nicholson hasn't stopped being our metaphor. He's been the vehicle that's taken us from an idea of rebellion that once had philosophical, even moral, implications to another idea of rebellion that has only hedonistic ones. This isn't a rebellion forged out of conviction or passion against a dull, bankrupt culture, but rather a rebellion that has accepted the values of that culture—ownership and sensation—and now only rages against a barely existent etiquette as to how ravenously these things should be pursued. That we've become a little disgusted with Nicholson because of it isn't any betrayal of us on his part, but rather betrayal of him on our part, because he's done his job so well. Let's not say that if Nicholson didn't exist we'd have to create him. Which would account for that look in his eyes, stepping up to the podium to announce the five nominations for Best Picture and keeping his part of the bargain in the process. That look in those satyr eyes that stared beyond the dull, graceless gallery of the fame-art of our time, into the cameras and through the portholes of television, and wondered silently, barely able to keep a straight face, whether this is the most depraved audience in America. ◻

ANDERS WENGREN

It isn't easy going one-on-one with Air Nicholson

PLAYING JACK'S GAME

BY MICHAEL ANGELI

This is what I know about Jack Nicholson: He was born in Neptune, New Jersey, in 1937. He eats peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches in the sack. He wears blue satin boxer shorts, keeps a dog named Chuckie and an assistant named Gloria. He was raised by his grandmother, who owned a beauty shop. His reaction to his first-time encounter with pal Warren Beatty, on the set of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, "Wow. Now *that's* what a movie star looks like!" Don't ask him for sex in the morning. He has an inseam of thirty-two inches and no discernible part in his hair. He drives a two-door convertible nearly identical to the one Jake Gittes borrows from Evelyn Mulwray in *Chinatown*. It doesn't have a vanity plate. The sign on his parking space at Paramount reads, RESERVED FOR JAKE GITTES ONLY.

He once dated a friend of mine, a graphic artist who described him as "creepy in a sexy way, and he sweated a lot." About her daily physical regimen he warned, "Jogging wrecks your tits." He shares his L.A. driveway with Marlon Brando, which raises the issue of who handles the shoveling chores when it snows. He was wise not to enter *The Two Jakes* this year at Cannes, where Anjelica Huston is serving as one of the judges. His DC Comics *Batman* trading card "Leer of the Crown Prince" is number 143. "My days are numbered in the Hollywood film industry," he remarked after seeing Dan Quayle's favorite flick, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Wearing fluorescent-orange socks, he once chased mistress Kateri Mayo Chandler around a bedroom with a Ping-Pong paddle. When John Belushi asked for pet chem expenses during a dubbing session of *Goin' South*, Jack gave him a hundred dollars' worth of dimes and nickels and had him picked up in a Subaru. He likes Picasso enough to have one hanging in his living room.

And here's one thing you and I both know, have for years: Jack loves basketball.

IT'S WEDNESDAY MORNING and I'm shooting up Mulholland, my basketball in the trunk, hot to play a little one-on-one with Jack. The fact that I'm an aspiring screenwriter, of course, has nothing to do with my desire to post him up in his own driveway. Owing to Jack's love of uniforms (didn't he look just swell in *The Last Detail*?), I have a hunch he might get a kick out of seeing me arrive in one. Alas, my uniform wardrobe is limited to a messenger's outfit, a fond memento from the writers' strike. It'll have to do.

As I approach the gates to Nicholson's pleasure dome, I come within sideswiping range of Marlon Brando himself, behind the wheel of his town car, serving as his own air bag. It augurs well.

IF YOU ARRIVE BEFORE 10:00 A.M., PLEASE RING THE NEXT ADDRESS. over a plaque fixed above Jack's buzzer reads. A new backboard is bolted at the top of his garage, the hoop strung with a shiny white net. Through a sliding screen door I make out the figure of someone in boxer shorts, reclining on a bed, watching TV. I buzz and wait at the front door, resplendent in my messenger's outfit, basketball on my hip. The door slides open to reveal the guy in the boxer shorts, only it isn't Jack.

"Can I help you?" he asks.

"I was hoping to play some basketball with Mr. Nicholson."

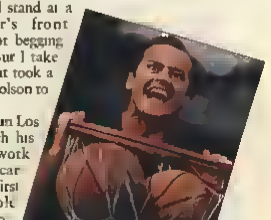
"Do you have an appointment?"

"Well, no. I was just looking for a little pickup game."

"He's not here. He's working at Paramount today. Do you have something to leave for Mr. Nicholson?"

Of course! A messenger's uniform implies a delivery. But, unfortunately, I have nothing to deliver save a few empty envelopes. Walking back to my car, I notice that the hoop on the garage looks awfully low. In fact, I'm certain I could slam-dunk this rig, the few inches I have on Tyrone Bogues notwithstanding.

AM I MAD, or just an aspiring screenwriter in a town where Nicholson's blessing is the ultimate imprimatur? Yes, it's a little humiliating for a grown man to don a messenger's uniform and stand at a star's front door begging for a game of hoops. But I take comfort in the fact that it took a while for even Jack Nicholson to rise in this town.



When he first arrived in Los Angeles, he stayed with his sister and was forced to work as a gofer in MGM's cartoon department. His first professional acting role came in a 1956 stage production of *Tea and Sympathy* that also starred Michael Landon and Edd "Kookie" Byrnes. His first screen appearance came in *Cry Baby Killer*, a 1958 Roger Corman film about a hotheaded psychopath who wept as he slaughtered drive-in patrons. He first ad-libbed in the 1967 film *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre*. "It's got garlic on it."

Michael Angeli *is a five-six power forward currently writing screenplays in Los Angeles.*

The bullets don't kill you. You die of blood poisoning." LBJ was his inspiration for the role of George Hanson in *Easy Rider*.

He never got past high school, but had a nose for literary property, optioning Jim Harrison's *Revenge* and Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*. He listens to opera, his hair stands on end when he gets sexually aroused, and he used to appear on *Divorce Court*. Roman Polanski was arrested in 1977 for cavorting with a minor at Jack's place. Jack sleeps on green silk sheets and keeps a picture of Anjelica Huston in his bathroom. And here's another thing you and I and the rest of the free world know about Jack: He owns courtside seats at the Great Western Forum.

My next move is suddenly clear. Buy two scalped tickets for the Lakers' playoff opener against Phoenix and take along my friend Andy Marx, Groucho's grandson, who claims he had dinner with Jack in 1974. I hope that it was a memorable meal.

I decide to make my move at half time, with the game tied and everyone in need of a good stretch or kidney tap. Jack exits up one of the aisles unmolested, and I take up position near the floor, hoping to intercept him on his way back. I am temporarily blinded by the radioactive blast of Kirk Douglas's plasma-red sweater as it seats my cornea. And here comes Jack, knitting his Joker's brow. The close game seems to have him on edge.

"So, Jack—looks like the Lakers' fast break is *goin' south*, huh?" My hand rests, perhaps a tad too heavily, on his shoulder, he's rocking back and forth on his heels, squinting attentively, looking like the troubled writer he played in *The Shining*. For a brief instant, I sense death and disfigurement. There's no hint that he appreciates my cinematic allusion.

"I can appreciate that," Jack finally grins, although he wears an expression that suggests a large finger grows out of my head.

"Listen, you wanna play a little hoop?"

"I wanna watch a little hoop," Jack says, boring through the crowd back to his seat.

The celebrity police don't recognize me and I'm herded away, but able to call out, "Mind if we talk after the game?"

"You can try," Jack says, the neighborly crossing of his eyes open to interpretation.

The Lakers lose by two, which is a hell of a thing to happen now. I trundle after Jack. Is he running from me? He looks a little uptight. In fact, to be honest, you couldn't drive a needle up his ass with a sledgehammer, but hey, it's only a game, right?

"How 'bout a game, Jack? To twelve. Little one-on-one. I have my Magic Johnson ball in the car."

"I'm busy," he smiles.

"Come on, I'll spot you four points." He groans—maybe he wants more. "Okay, five." We're walking upstairs to the parking lot. "So how about if I follow you home? We can play in your driveway. Even if your hoop is a little short."

"Short?" Jack growls.

"Jack, I could jam on it."

"It's regulation, pal." The issue seems closed.

"C'mon, Jack. I'll immortalize your game. I'll make you a legend." Is it what I said about his hoop being too low, or maybe he thinks he's already legend? Because Jack, at that moment, peers back at me with a malicious gleam in his eye and "accidentally" kicks me in the hand, the one that happens to be in front of my trouser mouse, thank God. He's wearing hard shoes, and my knuckle begins to glow like Kirk Douglas's sweater.

"That's two shots, Jack."

"Bullshit noncall, you ask me," Jack says, flashing his famous leer. And with that he fakes left, gives me the slip, and disappears into the Los Angeles night. I never did get to play him one-on-one.

So here's the last thing I know about Jack Nicholson. He sure can give a good foul. ◘

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Winner's Edge, 13 E. 4th St. (Sterling)

BALLY OF SWITZERLAND
Bally of Switzerland, 919 N. Michigan Ave.
Bloomingdale's, 900 N. Michigan Ave.
Carson Pirie Scott, 1 S. State St.
Kaehler Luggage Shop, 1421 Sherman Ave. (Evanston)
Lord & Taylor
Marshall Field's, 111 N. State St.
Rochester Big & Tall, 149 E. Ohio St.

G. H. BASS & CO.
Altman's Shoes
Edwards Shoes
Fell Shoes
Forest Bootery
Giesche Shoes
Henig's Shoes
Marshall Field's
Miro Balli Shoes
Parkway Slipper Box
Singer Shoes
Village Cobbler

BMW
Anderson Motor Company, 360 N. Rt. 31 (Crystal Lake)
Bill Jacobs Motorsport, 1564 W. Ogden Ave. (Naperville)
Fields Imports, 80 Greenbay Rd. (Winnetka)
Kreuz Continental, 1044 N. Western Ave. (Lake Forest)
Laurel Motors, 200 E. Ogden Ave. (Westmont)
Motor Werks of Barrington, 1475 S. Barrington (Barrington)
Patrick BMW, 534 Mall Dr. (Schaumburg)
Perillo BMW, 2825 N. Halsted
Peter Levin BMW, 431 W. Lincoln Hwy. (Chicago Heights)
Star Motors, Inc., 9015 S. Kedzie Ave. (Evergreen Park)
Westlake Imports, 466 W. Lake St. (Elmhurst)

COLE-HAAN
Altman's Shoes, 118 W. Monroe
The Brass Boot, 2116 Northbrook Court (Northbrook)
The Brass Boot, 900 N. Michigan Ave.
Cole-Haan Retail Store, 645 Michigan Ave.
Davis Congress Shop, 1547 N. Wells
Fell Shoes, 643 Central Ave. (Highland Park)
Forest Bootery, 611 Central Ave. (Highland Park)
Forest Bootery, 284 E. Market Square (Lake Forest)
Giesche Shoe Store, 400 Main St. (Glen Ellyn)
Jim Herron, Hilton Plaza, 700 E. Adams (Springfield)
Leonards, 144 N. York St. (Elmhurst)
Lord & Taylor, 835 N. Michigan Ave.
Mark Shale
Marshall Field's
Nunn Bush Shoe Store, Yorktown Shopping Ctr., Butterfield & Highland Sts. (Lombard)
Robert Vance, 301 Hawthorne Ctr. (Vernon Hills)
Spaulding's Men's Shop, 110 N. Marion St. (Oak Park)
Spaulding's, 1515 Shendan Rd. (Wilmette)
Spire Inc., 108 Skokie Blvd. (Wilmette)

THE DEXTER SHOE CO.
Abernathy's, 506 N. Seymour (Mundelein)
Country Cobbler, 1708 Glenview Rd. (Glenview)
Crawford Dept. Store, 3240 Kirchoff Rd. (Rolling Meadow)
Giesche Shoe Store, 5150 Main St. (Downers Grove)
Golden Shoes, 12212-14 S. Harlem Ave. (Palos Heights)
Joal Shoes, 8 N. Dryden (Arlington Heights)
Klines Dept. Store, 515 W. Lincoln Hwy. (Chicago Heights)
Knippens Shoes, 135 N. Hale (Wheaton)
Singer Shoes, 132 McHenry Rd. (Buffalo Grove)

DIRECTORY (CONTINUED)

THE OEXTER SHOE CO. (CONT'D)
Singer Shoes, Deer Brook Mall (Deerfield)
Singer Shoes, Northbrook Court (Northbrook)
Singer Florsheim Shoes, N. Riverside Mall (North Riverside)
Singer Florsheim Shoes, Ford City Shopping Mall
Singer Florsheim Shoes, Brickyard Mall
Singer Florsheim Shoes, Chicago Ridge Mall
Singer Florsheim Shoes, Lincoln Mall (Matteson)
Village Bootery, 52 S. Washington St (Hinsdale)
Wehde Shoes, 116 Main St. (Park Ridge)
Wehde Shoes, 123 E. Lincoln Hwy. (De Kalb)

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Bloomingdale's
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I. Magnin (Northbrook)
I. Magnin (Oak Brook)
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Lord & Taylor, Watertower
Lord & Taylor (Woodfield)
Marshall Field's, North State St.
Marshall Field's, Oakbrook Ctr. (Oak Brook)
Marshall Field's, Vernon Hills
Marshall Field's, Woodfield Mall (Schaumburg)
Saks Fifth Avenue
Saks Fifth Avenue, Old Orchard (Skokie)
Von Maur, Hickory Point (Decatur)

THE FRYE COMPANY
Alamo Shoes, 5321-23 Clark St.
Altman's Shoes, 118 W. Monroe St.
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Forest Bootery Ltd., 611 Central Ave. (Highland Park)
Hanigs J & M Store, 1 S. LaSalle St.
J & M Shoe Store, 660 N. Michigan Ave.
Jarps, 616 E. Sidley Blvd. (Dolton)
Milgram Kagan Corp., 1551 Huntington Dr. (Calumet City)
Parkway Slipper Box, 2754 N. Clark St.
R & L Shoes Inc., 718 Waukegan Rd. (Deerfield)
Singer Shoes, 174 S. Waukegan Rd. (Deerfield)
Todds, 2727 Mannheim Ave. (Franklin Park)

JOHNSTON & MURPHY
Johnston & Murphy Shop, Woodfield Shopping Ctr., E. 324 Woodfield (Schaumburg)
Johnston & Murphy Shop, Hawthorne Ctr. 523 Upper Level (Vernon Hills)
Johnston & Murphy Shop, 216 Stratford Square (Bloomingdale)
Johnston & Murphy Shop, 140 Oakbrook Shopping Ctr. (Oak Brook)
Johnston & Murphy Shop, 1116 Northbrook Court (Northbrook)

SEBAGO
Crawford's, 3240 Kerchoff Rd. (Rolling Meadows)
The Footery, 25 W. Chicago Dr. (Naperville)
The Footery, 114 N. West St. (Wheaton)
Forest Bootery Limited, 284 E. Market Square (Lake Forest)
Forest Bootery Limited, 611 Central Ave. (Highland Park)
Giesche Shoes, 5150 Main St. (Downers Grove)
Hanig's Shoes - All Locations
Parkway Slipper Box, 2754 N. Clark St.
Village Bootery, 52 S. Washington (Hinsdale)

SECTOR WATCHES
The Consortium, 50 E. Oak St.
Marshall Field's, 30 N. State St.
R. Rocca Jewelers, 5 S. Wabash Ave. #1207
Smart Jewelers, 3350 W. Devon Ave. (Lincolnwood)
Watchworks, Watertower, 835 N. Michigan Ave.

SPERRY TOP-SIDER
American Eagle Outfitters - All Locations
Barman's Big & Tall, 369-14 Army Trail Rd. (Bloomingdale)
Bloomingdale's, Galleria, Michigan Ave.
Chicago Yacht & Navigation, 1661 N. Elston Ave.
Church's English Shoes, 116 S. Wabash Ave.
Competitive Foot, 102 N. Marion (Oak Park)
Competitive Foot, 814 Hillgrove (Western Springs)
Country Cobbler, 1708 Glenview Rd. (Glenview)
Edward's Shoes, 1627 Sherman Ave. (Evanston)
Fell Co., 511 Lincoln Ave. (Winnetka)
Fell Shoes, 643 Central (Highland Park)
Forest Bootery, 611 Central (Highland Park)
Forest Bootery, 284 E. Market Square (Lake Forest)
Giesche Shoes, 21 N. 4th St. (Geneva)
Giesche Shoes, 400 Main St. (Glen Ellyn)
Golden Shoes, 12212 S. Harlem (Palos Heights)
Kaden's Shoes, 1931 Cherry Lane (Northbrook)
Knippens, 135 N. Hale (Wheaton)
Larsen Marine, 625 Sea Horse Dr. (Waukegan)
Lord & Taylor - All Locations
Main Street Shoe Shop, 233 Main St. (Woodstock)
Mallards Stores - All Locations
Manne Mart, 639 Ogden Ave. (Downers Grove)
Mark Shale - All Locations
Park Avenue Bootery, 345 Park Ave. (Glen Coe)
Port Supply, 2245 S. Michigan
Raymond Levine Fashions, Flossmoor Commons (Flossmoor)
Saks Fifth Avenue, Downtown Michigan Ave.
Singer Florsheim - All Locations
Singer Shoes, 1040 Northbrook Ctr. (Northbrook)
Singer Shoes, 174 S. Waukegan Rd. (Deerfield)
Smith Sport, 114 N. Marion (Oak Park)
Track 'n Trail, Woodfield Mall (Schaumburg)
Track 'n Trail, Orland Square (Orland Park)
Track 'n Trail, Fox Valley Ctr. (Aurora)
Village Bootery, 52 Washington (Hinsdale)
Village Cobbler Shoes, 200 Applebee St. (Barrington)
Vose Bootery, 837 Elm St. (Winnetka)

TIMBERLAND
Bigsby and Kruthers, 290 Oakbrook Ctr. (Oak Brook)
Bigsby and Kruthers, 1750 N. Clark
Blaines, 662 Western Ave. (Lake Forest)
Canterbury New Zealand, 900 Michigan Ave.
Gallagher, 1428 Lee St. (Des Plaines)
John's, 2512 N. Clark
Robert Vance, Hawthorne Ctr. (Buffalo Grove)
Robert Vance, 200 S. LaSalle St.
Saks Fifth Avenue, 669 N. Michigan Ave.
Saks Fifth Avenue, 56 Old Orchard Shopping Ctr. (Skokie)
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Spaulding's, 110 N. Marion (Oak Park)
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Austrian Ski & Sport Haus, 19001 S. Cicero (Country Club Hills)
Benthien Thomas O.D., 300 W. Washington
Doyle Opticians, 561 Chestnut (Winnetka)
Erehwon Mountain Supply, D-119 Woodfield Mall (Schaumburg)
Ernsten William, M.D., 251 E. Northwest Hwy. (Palatine)
Eye Care Association, 3825 Highland #3B (Downers Grove)
Eye Magic, Inc., 605 Elm Place (Highland Park)
Eye Works of Barington, 126-1 W. Main St. (Barrington)
Glasses Ltd., 49 E. Oak St.
H. J. Birch Optical Co., 5469 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Henderson, Ronald, Dr., 1815 W. Dundee Rd. (Northbrook)
Hirshman & Katz, Drs., 8901 W. Golf Rd. #200 (Des Plaines)
King Keyser Sportings, 41 S. Washington St. (Hinsdale)
Linton Opticians, 2500 Ridge Ave. (Evanston)
Marcus Opticians, 344 Park Ave. (Glencoe)
Marshall Field's
Optical Outlet Inc., 1304 Chicago Ave. (Evanston)
Outdoor Eyewear, Inc., 142 Danada Square W. (Wheaton)
Peepers Eyewear, 141 W. Jackson Blvd.
Precision Optical, 1725 Sherman Ave. (Evanston)
Pro Sports Ctr., 225 W. Golf Rd. (Schaumburg)
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For store information see page 230.

GERHARD JURKOVIC

White rice-cord Swiss-cotton pocket square by Imperial Handkerchiefs, and white cotton pocket squares by Ashear Brothers. These look especially good against a darker suit or jacket.

Rita Rudner

WOMEN WE LOVE

It was way back in the long-ago early '80s when we first realized the kind of comedienne Rita Rudner would be. We were sitting together in a New York deli at 2:00 in the morning, a terrible time to be eating pastrami, but that's what Rita Rudner was doing. She had just closed the last set at Catch a Rising Star, where she had killed an audience consisting of four drunks and a guy in a loud polyester suit. We were one of the drunks. ■ So anyway, the thing about this pastrami was the way Rita was eating it, which was not conventional. She was cutting it demurely with a knife and fork as opposed to tearing it apart with her teeth the way, say, Sam Kinison would have done. Or insulting it as it sat there defenseless the way David Letterman would have done. Or simply looking at it with an existential detachment approaching despair the way Steven Wright would have done.

No, Rita Rudner parsed that sandwich into neat pents fours. Noting our slack-jawed amazement, she fixed us with those doleful blue eyes and said, "I've always done things a little bit differently."

Here's what Rita Rudner does differently: She tells jokes the same way she eats pastrami—in tidy, juicy, bite-size morsels. At a time when the stare of the art in comedy is a two-by-four in the face, Rita is a sly saboteur against the conventions of everyday life—which, in this case, happens to be hers.

There she is, a frightened doe in a forest of yahoos, eyes wide in the stage lights, her voice wispy, shooting out each syllable in that oh-so-perfect diction, exploring the silences that perch on the edge of each punch line. "I was a goody good kid," she says. "Other kids got into drugs and ran away from home." Beat. "I read in bad light."

Rita offers up each deadeye observation as if she were sweetly apologizing for taking up your time. Which, thankfully, she is doing more often. With her own BBC series airing this fall, an HBO special, "Born to Be Mild," scheduled for December, and movie scripts piling up outside her Beverly Hills home, Rita has come a long way from that pastrami sandwich.

"When will *this* be over?" she asked sadly that night over the pickled tomato, speaking, we assumed, of the dues she was then paying.

"Maybe a couple of years," we said gently.

"Good," she replied. Beat. "By that time I'll have gotten rid of this heartburn." ■

MARK HANAUER/ONYX



BETTER FED THAN RED

He was the heartthrob of China's democracy movement. This year Wu'erkaixi is dining out on the revolution ■ By Joseph F. Kahn

The revolutionary career of Wu'erkaixi is a story bracketed by two faints. ■ It is an occupational hazard of the modern freedom fighter, who must work under the hot white lights of the minicams. The Xinjiang Room of the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, is sweltering, packed with journalists, students, government and party officials, and hundreds of millions of Chinese are watching on television. ■ It is May 18, 1989, when the twenty-one-year-old Wu'erkaixi bursts through the door. It is May 18, 1989, the sixth day of the hunger strike by the students occupying Tiananmen Square. Premier Li Peng, who has already secretly decided to declare mar-

PROFILE



JOSH GOSFIELD



BRASH

Wu'erkaixi as hero addressing a crowd of students in Beijing in May 1989

ar Harvard is crowded with students, most of them Chinese. The Beijing regime is still in power, and on the demianniversary of the bloody suppression of the student occupation, dissident leader Liu Binyan lectures on the movement's failures. Sixty-five years of age and possessed of a professorial baritone, he could be a grandfather to Wu'erkaixi. "The criticism of Wu'erkaixi is well taken," Liu says. "And this criticism could be applied to his whole generation. They had none of the art of struggle, no effective tactics or strategy. The movement came too early and it was not properly thought out." Wu'erkaixi fidgets petulantly on the podium, scowling at Liu, then buries his face in his hands. When his turn comes to speak, he staggers to the lectern, tears streaking his face. He manages only a choked sentence or two—"Why has Wu'erkaixi become the issue?"—before collapsing theatrically at Liu's feet. But this time there is no hint of martyrdom. Wu'erkaixi just falls on his face.

NOT PROPERLY THOUGHT OUT? Of course the movement wasn't properly thought out; it was improvised in front of

with his fleshy features, thick eyebrows, and bushy hair, he looked more like a Turk than a Han Chinese. Raised in Beijing, he spent only a small portion of his life with the Kazak nomads and Muslim clerics who populate Xinjiang. But his heritage gave him a rural pungency that sometimes excited and often offended his inbred Han Chinese classmates.

On the evening of April 20, 1989, he emerged from the mob milling in front of the red-lacquered gates of Zhongnanhai, the compound that shelters China's top leaders. Clad in a denim jacket and cowboy boots, he climbed atop a nearby wall and began a passionate speech that, interspersed with jokes, questions from the audience, and songs, would last well into the night. "Do you know that the fascist police want to use violence against the students?" he shouted. "I am outraged! Someone needs to stand up and take charge!" Then he climbed down from the wall and introduced himself to the protest leaders from Beijing University. "I am Wu'erkaixi," he announced, using the Sinocized version of his given name, Uerkesh. He said it as if he expected the name to be recognized. "I had

"Do you know that the fascist police intend to use violence against the students?" he shouted. "I am outraged!"

tial law, has made an unprecedented concession in hopes of talking the strikers into subservience. He has agreed to debate the student leaders live before a national television audience. Wu'erkaixi, hungry and exhausted, was actually in the hospital, but he has raced to the hall in an ambulance, and there he stands before the world, pale and sweaty, with his oxygen bottle by his side, his hospital gown flapping around his knees. The indignity does not embarrass him. With an impertinence heretofore unheard of in China, Wu'erkaixi cuts the premier off midsentence. "This meeting comes not only a little late, but too late," he shouts hoarsely. "We don't have much time to listen to you, Premier Li." Then, in what many Chinese will always remember as one of the most dramatic moments of the rebellion, he collapses to the ground, missing martyrdom by the thickness of the rug that cushions his fall. As his head hits the floor, many in the room think they are hearing the sound of the old Beijing regime toppling as well.

IT IS A COLD DAY, half a year later and half a world away. Science Center Room C

Joseph F. Kahn *covered the Chinese democracy movement for* The Dallas Morning News. *This is his first article for* Esquire.

the cameras. Secrecy and elaborate strategy were the hallmarks of an earlier generation. The current style is to short-cut decades of organizing with one galvanic moment of political theater: a hunger strike, a march, a dramatic faint. The students had demands: freedom of speech and the right to demonstrate, an end to official corruption. They had slogans, banners, and amplifiers. But they had no cogent ideology, no comprehensive plan of action, and only the most ephemeral of organizations. It was only in this context that Wu'erkaixi could have emerged as a leader, based on little more than audacity, passion, and a rhetorical style astonishingly poised between harangue and banter.

But this is not a story of revolutionary heroism. It is about what happens *after* the klieg lights are turned off, after the buzz of worldwide acclaim is replaced by almost universal indifference. This is the story of how the very qualities that made Wu'erkaixi the revolutionary hero of 1989 transformed him into the outcast of 1990.

HE WAS AN UNKNOWN, a second-year student at the elite Beijing Normal University, with a brief, and recently thwarted, career in school politics. His family is Uighur, from the dry plains of the Xinjiang province, two thousand miles west of Beijing,

no idea who he was," recalls Shen Tong, who had been involved in sporadic student demonstrations since the mid-1980s. "But we thought the movement could use someone like him."

Not properly thought out! Of course it wasn't; not thinking things out was a point of pride for Wu'erkaixi. In a sense it was what democracy meant to him: a rebellion against the sterile, circumscribed, cautiously desperate life of a Chinese academic. Wu'erkaixi was studying to be a professor of literature, a position with a salary somewhat less than that of the average waiter. Like many of the other student revolutionaries, Wu'erkaixi believed that China under Deng Xiaoping had fallen into a state of spiritual inertia. Rather than study diligently to benefit "socialist construction," these students found their spiritual home in the *wu pai*, the "five factions" of campus life, which encompassed such politically incorrect activities as sex, religion, card playing, money grubbing, and scheming to get into an American university.

Wu'erkaixi's preferred solace was a pretty co-ed on his arm. In the puritanical atmosphere of China's elite universities, this in itself was a powerful political statement.

"Everyone was very hungry for sex," he says. "But everyone said that to have sex before getting married is a bad thing. 'May-

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be you should wait until you're thirty,' people say. But then every night since they were fifteen they masturbate. I'm not ashamed to say I do what I enjoy." Handsome and charismatic, he had no trouble finding companionship. "He was like a Latino drug lord," recalls one friend. "He always wanted at least one woman with him, tell



MACHO

Wu'erkaixi as hunger striker center with Wang Dan (left) in Tiananmen Square

"Wu'erkaixi was like a Latino drug lord. He always wanted at least one woman with him, telling him he was great."

ing him he was great. Each night he had only one thing on his mind. He wanted to find a party. If he couldn't find a party, he started his own."

Traditional politics he considered dispensable. "Politics is boring, and politicians don't understand people," he was fond of saying. "I'm an artist first, then a politician." His spiritual inspiration came from the singer Cui Jian. "I Am a Wolf from the North," Cui's ballad about loneliness in the midst of the world's most communitarian society, captured the restless alienation of China's young intellectual elite. Wu'erkaixi's other existential hero was his friend Hou Dejian, also a pop singer. The parable of Hou Dejian, as recounted by Wu'erkaixi, is as follows: "Hou Dejian goes everywhere by his Mercedes. One day a friend said, 'I like your car very much.' Hou said, 'Okay, you can have it.' He handed over the keys and walked home ten miles to tell his wife." This profligacy, so opposed to the calculating, cheese-paring life prescribed by Chinese socialism, represented everything Wu'erkaixi aspired to: to have a Mercedes and to give it away, paradoxically transcending materialism through a grand materialistic gesture.

WU'ERKAIXI ARRIVED at this enlightened philosophy of life in a roundabout fashion. As a teenager in Xinjiang, he was considered brilliant but uppity, a dangerous combination in the rigid world of the Chinese school system. "His mother was particularly concerned," recalls Kahat Barai, a cousin of Wu'erkaixi's who now studies in the United States. "The genius young boy,' as they called him, never learned to shut up when he disagreed. Everyone thought he would get into trouble." In high school and then in college at Beijing Normal, Wu'erkaixi pursued membership in local Communist party organizations, following in the footsteps of his father, an active party member who works as a writer and translator in Xinjiang.

At Beijing Normal University, Wu'erkaixi headed a troupe of student dancers, actors, and musicians, earning plaudits from university officials for his work. But by his second year, he began to grow frustrated. The college canceled a performance Wu'erkaixi produced after it was found to feature tap music and breakdancing. Once favored for promotion through the internal party network at the college, he was rejected for nomination to the student union because he was seen as too outspoken. These disappointments prompted Wu'erkaixi to become flamboyant in his disdain for a system that suffocates self-expression. "I like to enjoy my life and enjoy beer. I just say so. I like beautiful women and I want to spend time at parties," he said later, in what amounted to a personal credo. "I love myself, so I say I'm good and I deserve to be happy. I want to live for me. I am Wu'erkaixi, not someone else."

IT WAS IN THAT reckless spirit that Wu'erkaixi undertook to challenge the government of China. On April 22, two days after his impromptu speech outside Zhongnanhai, he joined two other students carrying a petition for Li Peng. The student in the center, holding the petition to his forehead, dropped to his knees on the steps of the Great Hall, as custom dictated. The one on the right knelt as well. Wu'erkaixi, who had frequently called Li an "uneducated scoundrel with a low IQ," remained standing. A week later, the Beijing Autonomous Students' Union was organized to coordinate the protests and elected the brash twenty-one-year-old chairman.

Wu'erkaixi helped spearhead what quickly became the largest antigovernment movement in forty years of communist rule. On some days in the spring of 1989, hundreds of thousands of Beijing residents swarmed the streets around Tiananmen Square to marvel at what then appeared to be a total breakdown of government control. In the one-hundred-acre square, students yelled slogans over loudspeakers while thousands of others milled about dozens of makeshift tents, holding seminars, sleeping, singing, sunbathing, and talking to journalists.

Wu'erkaixi set up headquarters across town, at Beijing Normal, in a room plastered with posters of rock stars and naked women, whose long eyelashes and artificially rounded eyes gave them a chic Western look. He assigned a girlfriend/secretary to screen his visitors while he raced in and out, shouting "no comment" to journalists lined up for interviews. The arrogance of power overcame him before he really had any, arriving late for a press conference at Tiananmen Square one day, he announced that all questions would have to wait until after his back rub.

His sense of self-importance had already achieved imperial dimensions. When a group of reporters managed to lure him into a local tourist hotel for a few beers one sweltering May afternoon, Wu'erkaixi, sweat seeping through his bright-green polo shirt, warned that he might be forced underground at any moment.

"You're lucky. This could be the last interview anybody has with me," he said as he chugged a Tsingtao beer and smoked a borrowed Winston. "It's become increasingly dangerous. But I'm not afraid."

When one reporter asked him how he had risen to the top ranks of the student movement, he replied, "I knew we needed a leader who wasn't afraid to die. The other [student leaders] had no real ability. The situation needed someone like me."

In the square a few days later, he said, "I'm doing this better than Lech Walesa. The question is how I'm doing compared to Gandhi."

Wu'erkaixi certainly was having more *fun* than Gandhi had, an issue the Chinese authorities later used in an attempt to discredit him. They released a photograph of him eating at a restaurant, intended to show that he had faked his fast. The photo was a smear, taken after the fast had been called off. But it is true that as chairman



of the student group Wu'erkaixi did avail himself of a large and mysterious supply of foreign exchange certificates, the highly prized currency foreigners use in taxicabs and expensive restaurants. His colleagues and rivals agree that Wu'erkaixi's duties didn't cause him to miss many meals, even during his putative fast. In fact, he was proud of his avoirdupois. Several nights a week, he would hold court late into the night at a campus bar, putting away round after round of alcohol. In public, he would proudly lift up his shirt to show



FLASHY

Wu'erkaixi as dissident leading a protest march in Washington, D.C.

He filled his apartment with electronic gear and took to wearing a gold watch and two-thousand-dollar suits.

off a premature beer belly.

Wu'erkaixi's apotheosis lasted barely a month. After midnight on the night of May 22, with as many as three hundred thousand Chinese troops ringing the capital, Wu'erkaixi gave his last speech in Tiananmen Square. The movement is lost, he told the students. He urged them—correctly, in retrospect—to postpone the protest and retreat to their campuses. He gave the speech his familiar coda. He fainted.

JUST AFTER THE SPEECH a rival faction ousted Wu'erkaixi from the leadership of the student union on the grounds that he was not radical enough. The leader of the opposing group, a twenty-four-year-old woman named Chai Ling, later took it upon herself to personally bar Wu'erkaixi from entering the square. Chai was in charge when several units of the People's Liberation Army, shortly before midnight on June 3, plowed and shot their way into Tiananmen Square. Student activists throughout the city had detained incoming troops on three previous occasions, but their street-clogging tactics this time could not contain the endless columns of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and troops with AK-47 assault rifles. By dawn, perhaps as many as one thousand Beijing residents lay massacred in the streets around the square, some of them crushed by tanks. Ironically, the vast majority of the student protesters, viewed even then by the government as young prodigies to be handled with care, escaped injury in the crackdown. Wu'erkaixi left by 4:00 A.M., and the remaining students departed under army orders before dawn, stumbling to their campuses through the carcasses of burned-out civilian buses, charred military vehicles, and corpses. A week later, the authorities designated Wu'erkaixi the second-most-wanted dissident in the country. The first, Wang Dan, was captured and is believed to be held in Qincheng Prison.

How Wu'erkaixi escaped from China remains a mystery, fueled largely by Wu'erkaixi himself. One reason he won't tell this part of his saga is that he doesn't want to jeopardize the "underground railway" escape route he says is still being used to smuggle dissidents out of the country. Another reason is that he hopes one day to sell the story. "The first time I ever flew on an international flight was from Hong Kong to Paris," he told me later. "That's a clue. Now you know I didn't take a plane out of the mainland." He is willing to say only that friends in the movement spent some $300,000 in bribe money to help him make it over the border to Hong Kong.

What is known is that within a month after the massacre, Wu'erkaixi left Hong Kong and traveled to his first home in exile, a luxurious château outside Paris. American officials helped to keep his whereabouts secret by encouraging speculation that the young dissident was holed up inside the U.S. Embassy compound in Paris. When China objected to France's provision of asylum to Wu'erkaixi, French president François Mitterrand said, "A government that kills its youth has no future." Wu'erkaixi was issued a special diplomatic passport that reads: "The bearer fought for liberty but is not tolerated by his mother country. Please extend all privileges."

Who could begrudge the young hero a bulging ego? At the British Embassy in Paris one July morning, Wu'erkaixi waited impatiently on a long line to obtain a visa that would allow him to return to Hong Kong. A woman friend, excited to have the duty of entertaining a major dissident, had thought to lighten up the atmosphere with a few jokes. But she laughed too loud.

"You must be quiet," he scolded her. "You cannot put me in this situation. I am recognized everywhere I go. It's very dangerous for both of us when people recognize me, do you understand?" She apologized.

Soon thereafter, a Chinese man approached the couple and said, "I heard you two speaking in Chinese and I wonder if you could help me with this application to Hong Kong."

A look of horror on his face, Wu'erkaixi spoke without looking at the man. "It is dangerous for you to be next to me."

"I'm so sorry," the man replied. "Why would it be dangerous?"

"Do you have any idea who I am?"

"No," the man said.

"I am Wu'erkaixi."

WU'ERKAIXI'S ARROGANCE WAS tolerated, even encouraged, in the West. Being an exiled freedom fighter, apparently, means never having to say you're sorry. And in the months after the Tiananmen massacre, it meant never having to pick up the tab. From France, Wu'erkaixi traveled to Bonn, New York, Chicago, Sydney, and Palm Springs—the last for a conference of Pacific Rim CEOs who put him up in a $3,500-a-night hotel suite. He spent a weekend with Ted Kennedy in Hyannis Port and received a Reebok human rights award from Sting, the Cui Jian of the West. Harvard tracked him down and invited him to enroll, which he did. A movie producer offered him $100,000 for the rights to his life story, and Houghton Mifflin approached him and fellow dissident Shen Tong about writing a book. (Wu'erkaixi later backed out of both deals.) Wu'erkaixi was made vice-president of the Federation for a Democratic China, an international umbrella organization formed to bring together the thousands of overseas Chinese political and social organizations. The group gave him money to open an office in Boston. And to his delight he found that



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The Eagle and the Bear: Dateline 1961, Berlin
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there were pretty co eds in the West too who were captivated by the exotic hero of Tiananmen Square

"I think I'm one of the biggest stars of the year," Wu'erkaixi said.

Money tolled in, not just from speeches but from "red envelopes," the traditional gratuities that wealthy Chinese press on the famous or powerful in search of *guanxi*, or connections. Some of these envelopes contained as much as $10,000. As fast as the money came in, Wu'erkaixi spent it. He filled his apartment, in Somerville, Massachusetts, with expensive electronic gear and took to sporting a gold watch and wearing two-thousand-dollar Italian suits. Once he paid for friends to fly to Boston from around the country for Maine lobsters and a tour of New Hampshire foliage.

The money was his, but his fellow exiles, not all as famous and well situated, were naturally jealous. He acknowledges a moral debt to the movement for the $300,000 it spent to help him escape China, but says he has no intention of reimbursing his supporters. Only belatedly this past winter did he establish a trust fund to keep track of his income. And when he was questioned about his spendthrift ways, he adopted a prickly politician's answer, delivered in polished English. "I don't know that it's required procedure under American law to lay open to the public one's income. But I can tell you that I'm clean and that our financial operation is being supervised and audited by accredited accountants. We abide by all standard procedures."

For Americans, ostentatious displays of wealth are commonplace, but the many

SNIDE

When Jesse Helms asked his opinion of American food, he said: "I hate it. You have Coke and blue jeans, that's it."

Chinese intellectuals living in the United States were shocked by what they saw. This was no way for the martyr of Tiananmen to act, they complained. He should do what all young exiles *must* do: study. Wu'erkaixi refused to humble himself before this plebe system. He all but ignored the two courses he was taking at Harvard and instead set about attacking what he called the paralysis of the older dissident thinkers.

Wu'erkaixi's own "cultural analysis" of the student struggle, delivered in numerous speeches around the country, tanked the contributions of his hero, the singer Cui Jian, ahead of those of the prominent astrophysicist Fang Lizhi. This did not endear him to the dissident establishment. In the months after the massacre, many Chinese had reassessed the contributions of the movement Wu'erkaixi led. Unlike leaders of previous struggles for liberation in China, the students of Tiananmen left no pamphlets, no magazines, nothing to demonstrate that they had thoroughly contemplated the ramifications of what they were doing. The fact that the movement disintegrated immediately after the June 4 crackdown convinced older dissidents that the students had failed to influence those who were not a part of their collegiate circle. (Such out reach is crucial in a country where less than 1 percent of the population of 1.1 billion receive any higher education at all.) In the new analysis by the movement mandarins, Wu'erkaixi and his colleagues were said to be motivated only by selfish interest and to have shown a brazen disregard for China's long history.

Wu'erkaixi did not help matters when his audiences, expecting a serious discussion of the democratic movement, were treated to lengthy diatribes about Wu'erkaixi's struggle for happiness and personal identity. What they didn't realize, of course, was that the two subjects were inseparable in his mind. "I'm glad you feel like a wolf from the north," one teacher said after a speech that Wu'erkaixi had capped off with an a cappella version of Cui Jian's ballad. "But we are talking about the poor country of China." Wu'erkaixi dismissed these complaints as petty intellectualizing. "They're just happy to criticize when they get the opportunity," he said. "What China needs is fighters, not this kind of old man."

IN AN ASTONISHINGLY short time, Wu'erkaixi lost his cachet. Part of it was inevitable, events in Eastern Europe dominated the news last fall and winter, and China's failed revolution receded to a distant memory. But his arrogance had more to do with it. Except for the top television journalists, whom he courted, he made a habit of torturing the press. A reporter who traveled up from New York to see him in Boston was granted a five minute interview. He took pleasure in confounding his translators with untranslatable quips and nonsequiturs.

"Do you still have contact with any of your friends?" a reporter asked.

"I never talk about my bedroom," Wu'erkaixi replied.

"When did you become interested in Western democracy?"

"I didn't look at a calendar."

"My Chinese is rusty, but if you like, we can speak a little," another reporter offered.

"Don't strain yourself," Wu'erkaixi replied brusquely.

Of American culture, the only aspect that engaged his interest was food. If he ever returns to China, as he hopes to someday, he will leave behind fond memories of cheese and little else. He is especially contemptuous of American beer. "In China, I was famous by beer," he says proudly, in one of his occasional lapses from correct idiom. (He is comfortable with English in informal situations, but prefers Chinese for serious discussion.) "I can't understand Americans. Budweiser is such a terrible beer. It's like water. It *is* water. But then you have Bud Light." When he met Jesse Helms, the North Carolina senator asked him what he thought of American food. "I told him I hate it," Wu'erkaixi said. "You have Coke and blue jeans, that's it."

Arrogance was also at the heart of Wu'erkaixi's deteriorating relationship with his movement allies. This past January, the Federation for a Democratic China, once Wu'erkaixi's stronghold, established a commission to scrutinize his finances and public conduct. The Federation gave him a formal reprimand for making "unauthorized statements to the press." He lost funding for his office in Boston and was almost stripped of his position as vice-president. Wu'erkaixi's place as the unofficial spokesman for the younger dissidents was taken by the more self-effacing Shen Tong, who played a less visible role in the student movement but had a better understanding than did Wu'erkaixi of how to play the exile game.

As America lost interest in him, Wu'erkaixi returned the favor. After dropping his Harvard courses, he sold his furniture and in February quietly returned to France. Frustrated at being out of the spotlight, though, he resorted to increasingly obvious spectacles. One spring day in Paris, he invited the press to watch him taunt the guards at the Chinese Embassy. He marched into the foyer of the main embassy building, loudly declared, "I am Wu'erkaixi!" and dared anyone to detain him. If they had shut the doors, he would have

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NATION PREPARES FOR LEANER TIMES

The Skinniest Six

ROUND TIP
157 calories
5 g gms total fat*
(2 1 gms sat fat)

TOP LOIN
178 calories
7 0 gms total fat*
(3. 1 gms sat. fat)

TOP ROUND
183 calories
4 8 gms total fat*
(1 4 gms sat fat)

EYE OF ROUND
143 calories
4 2 gms total fat*
(1 5 gms sat fat)

TENDERLOIN
179 calories
8 5 gms total fat*
(3.8 gms sat. fat)

TOP SIRLOIN
185 calories
6 1 gms total fat*
(2 4 gms sat. fat)

BEEF AND TODAY'S HEALTH STAMPEDE.

These are leaner times Conspicuous consumption is out The basics are back People are eating lighter leaner foods And here's the whole story

Calories, the inside account

The Skinniest Six cuts of beef are surprisingly lean and low in calories In fact three ounces of lean, trimmed beef average a mere 180 calories* Makes you stop and think. About beef fajitas and Japanese steak salad

Cholesterol, perception vs. reality.

This should make headlines lean trimmed beef has no more cholesterol than chicken —without the skin While chicken does have less fat moderate servings of beef fit easily within leading dietary guidelines

Nutritional facts rounded-up.

Lean beef has a high ratio of nutrients to calories Number crunchers take note Three ounces supply 38% of the U.S. RDA for vitamin B-12 and zinc. Plus a generous 56% of U S RDA for protein. Not to mention 44% of the recommendation for iron That s quite a mouthful

Wisdom to steer by.

Nutritionists recommend a balanced varied diet and leaner cuts of meat Training gurus push aerobic exercise Stress management types suggest a month in the Bahamas Grilling steaks on the beach, no doubt

Dinnertime in no time.

Beef is perhaps the ultimate fast food From quick steaks and fajitas to blazing stir frys No time left? Time for juicy leftovers

Beef.
Real food for real people.

*Source: USDA Handbook #8-13 1990 Rev., U.S. RDA National Research Council 1980, 10th Edition. Figures are for cooked and trimmed 3 oz. serving. *3 oz. broiled & 3 oz. cooked.
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QUICK BEEF FAJITAS

Stir-fry pepper and onions with cumin, oregano and minced garlic. Broil marinated sirloin. Top tortilla with vegetables and sliced beef. Ole

For a long recipe booklet, write the B.I.C. Dept. L 444 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL 60611 Please enclose 50¢

been trapped on sovereign Chinese territory But he knew that he would catch the staff off guard and that they would never attempt to capture him without orders It was a pure publicity stunt

IN LATE MARCH, Wu'erkaixi returned briefly to the United States to deliver a round of speeches to college audiences. I caught up with him one afternoon at a bar at the Best Western Hotel in Ogdensburg, New York, near the Canadian border. Predictably, the first topic of conversation was food. "I admit that I can't resist eating

HARSH A reporter who traveled to see him was granted a five-minute interview.

cheese," he said after ordering chicken parmigiana and some french fries to accompany a steady supply of Beck's Dark. "That may be my biggest weakness How much do you think I weigh?"

"One hundred sixty five?"

"No, much higher than that," he said.

"One hundred eighty five?"

"Just a little bit higher."

To hold a serious conversation with Wu'erkaixi, one must fight against a seemingly endless stream of anecdotes, observations, and pseudophilosophy. When I asked him about America, he replied instead "Both the French and the British hate Americans In France they come right up to you and tell you face to face, 'I hate Americans.' They're joking. But Brits tell you, completely seriously, 'We just don't like Americans.' And they're not joking.

"The other thing about the Brits is that they really don't speak the same language as Americans. The Brits never say what they mean If you have to go to the bathroom in Britain, you say, 'Excuse me, I'm off someplace for a bit.' In America if you ask, 'Can I go someplace?' they say, 'This is *America*, you can go anyplace you want!'"

During his stay in this country, Wu'erkaixi said, he learned two useful phrases "One is 'So what' and the other is 'Fuck you.' If people don't like me, I say, 'So what.' If they bother me too much, I say, 'Fuck you.' I've had plenty of chances to say 'Fuck you.'"

After ordering a fifth round of Beck's, Wu'erkaixi discussed his latest gambit His plan is to produce and transmit antigovernment propaganda via shortwave radio from a broadcast station based on the SS *Goddess of Democracy* He will run the radio station from Paris. But it is unlikely that the project will ever come to fruition Bureaucratic snafus have prevented organizers from transporting the equipment to the China Sea, and the Chinese government has threatened to sink the ship if the radio station ever commences broadcasting In the meantime, Wu'erkaixi is renting an apartment just outside Paris, "very big but very cheap," and has asked his trustees to give him money for a secondhand car

He has also paid the ultimate compliment to Hou Dejian, the pop singer who was his hero and friend He has taken up with Hou's wife, Cheng Lin, a pop star in her own right who lives in Australia. Hou, who remained in China, continued a lone crusade against the regime after Tiananmen until he left the country this past June. Wu'erkaixi has told friends that he is "very serious" about Cheng and would consider moving to Sydney to be with her.

As the afternoon wore on, Wu'erkaixi became philosophical about his new status as a movement pariah

"When I came out of China, I considered myself *zhu yao* [a star]," he said "But now I consider myself *pei yao* [supporting cast] Maybe it's not the time to be a leader. I think my time will come, because I am still a fighter I am still a hunger striker. I want people to think of me as a hunger striker, not a refugee Someday I will take the fight back home."

That's one dream He has another Wu'erkaixi wants to return to China to see his parents, whom he misses very much If he's able to return to his home state of Xinjiang, he will open a Uighur restaurant "It will be a very special restaurant I want to introduce the world to the Uighur people, not to make money," he said, staring into his beer The restaurant will feature Chinese breakfasts, a variety of egg and noodle dishes. For lunch, the restaurant will offer Uighur fast food. At dinner, a choice of French or Uighur cuisine "Our first branch will be in Urumchi [the capital of Xinjiang]. But within a couple of years we'll open in Beijing, New York, Sydney, Los Angeles I think it will be a very famous restaurant because I'm a very good cook."

The restaurant's main specialty? Duck "I love duck. But it won't be American duck American duck is too sweet." G

YOU CAN CALL ME SLIM!

BEEF UP YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND WIN THE TASTY-TRIM STEAK SWEEPS

The Beef Industry Council and Beef Board would like to test your knowledge of the leanest beef servings Refer to the opposite page to answer the following three questions as the "Nation Prepares for Leaner Times."

1) *How many calories are in an average 3-ounce cooked serving of Beef?*

2) *Three ounces of cooked lean beef supply what % of the U S RDA for zinc and B-12?*
a) 17% b) 28% c) 38% d) 44%

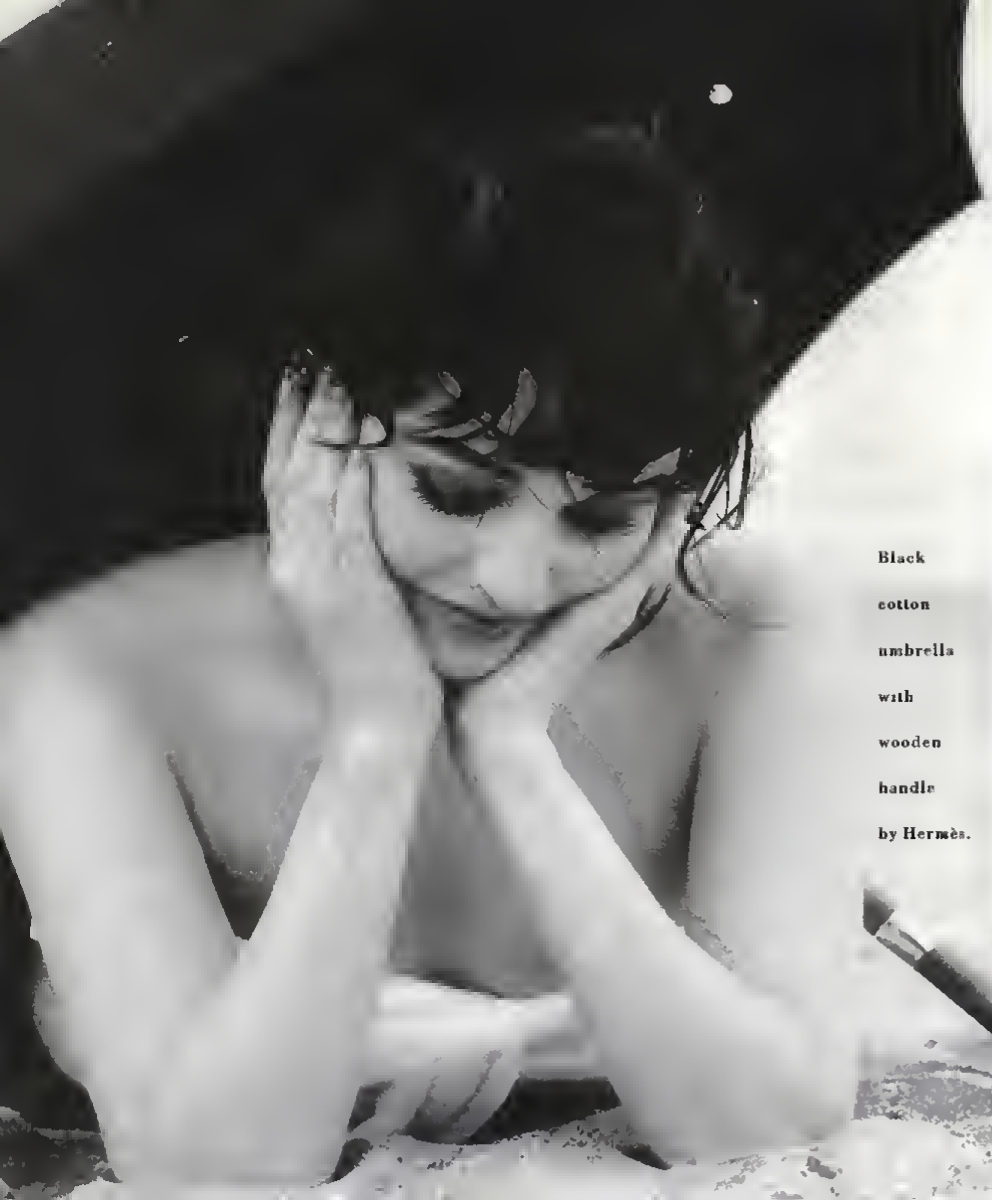
3) *Name three of the "Skinniest Six" cuts of beef*

On a picture postcard write the answers to the three questions along with your name, address and phone number to

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ESQUIRE Magazine
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One first-prize winner chosen at random from all entries, will receive a **DP AIRGOMETER STEPPER** home-exercise machine, a stir-fry cooking set, a complete set of home fitness videos, and a Big Beef sampler pack Five second-prize winners will each receive a gourmet cooking video One hundred runners-up will each receive a beef recipe booklet

You Can Call Me Slim!" Official Rules. No purchase necessary. To enter the "You Can Call Me Slim!" sweepstakes write the answers on a postcard, print your name and address and mail to: You Can Call Me Slim! c/o ESQUIRE 1790 Broadway NY NY 10019 or receipt by October 15, 1990. Only one entry per person allowed. Winners will be selected by a random drawing by November 15, 1990. The Beef Industry Council and Beef Board will conduct the random drawing. All decisions by judges are binding. Contest open to residents of the USA 18 years of age or older, except employees and their families of The Hearst Corporation and the Beef Industry Council and Beef Board and their affiliates, promotion, operating, and agency companies. Contest void where prohibited and subject to all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. One prize is a DP Airgometer Stepper home exercise machine, a stir-fry cooking set, a set of home fitness videos, and a Beef sampler pack. Estimated retail value of prize is $1,900. The winner is responsible for all taxes. In case a prize is not claimed, another winner will be selected at random from among the remaining eligible entries. Winners will be notified by mail and agree to allow the Publicity Release. One second-prize winner will each receive a gourmet cooking video valued at $30. For a winners list send a stamped self-addressed envelope to: You Can Call Me Slim! Consul Western List, c/o ESQUIRE, 1790 Broadway, NY NY 10019 by October 30, 1990. Residents of VA/WA need not include postage on return envelope. Contest void



Black cotton umbrella with wooden handle by Hermès.



Americans Abroad

THE EASE OF AMERICAN DESIGN HAS FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH EUROPEAN STYLE. HERE ARE TEN PAGES OF PROOF

FASHION

Photographs by Dominique Isserman



Brown single-breasted overcoat that is fuller across the chest, black double-breasted sport jacket, mahogany wool shirt with a convertible collar that lies flat and offers more comfort, and black pleated trousers by Ronaldus Shamask. Fedora by Country Gentlemen.



Not only are the clothes becoming softer, but the colors are, too. Eggplant double-breasted overcoat and cranberry mini-cable mock turtleneck by Roger Forsythe for Perry Ellis Signature. Fedora by Borsalino. Gloves by Fownes. Umbrella by Hermès.





Midnight-blue double-breasted gabardine trench coat, charcoal wool-flannel shirt, and trousers by Bill Robinson. Fedora by Bollman. Gloves by Coach Leatherware. Umbrella by Hermès.

Double-breasted tweed overcoat, as comfortable to wear as a bathrobe, by Joseph Abboud. Gray houndstooth sport jacket, gray wool turtleneck, and gray pleated trousers by Joseph Abboud. Fedora by Marsha Makins. Gloves by Coach Leatherware. Umbrella by Hermès.

Navy double-breasted cashmere overcoat by Polo is more proof that we've shed the armor of the Eighties. Gray cable-knit turtleneck and gray flannel trousers by Polo. Fedora by Borsalino. Gloves by Fownes. Opposite page: For a more casual look, a gray single-breasted blazer-coat by Andrew Fezza. Deep-royal-blue shirt by Andrew Fezza. Fedora by Worth & Worth. Gloves by Gates. Umbrella by Hermès.



Navy double-breasted wool overcoat by Andrew Fezza. Fedora by Worth & Worth. Umbrellas by Hermès.

Heather-green single-breasted balmacaan with deep-pleated back by Jhane Barnes creates a capelike effect and is very roomy. Navy trousers by Jhane Barnes. Fedora by Country Gentleman. Leather gloves by Gates. Shoes by Charles Jourdan. Umbrella by Hermès.

For store information see page 230



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DALLAS

BY MICHAEL ENNIS

How It Got Like This

Not long ago, it seemed that Dallas—as in *Dallas*, as in America's Team, as in the 1984 Republican National Convention—was well on its way to becoming America's City. Brassily entrepreneurial yet staunchly conservative, with the nation's fastest-growing churches and highest divorce rate, Dallas embodied the have-it-all, just-say-no élan of the 1980s. But then Big D got lowercased by the oil bust, and its hubris humbled as abruptly as if the gods had taken offense. What remains is a curiously futuristic sort of archaeological site, the glittering postmodern towers still rising in greet Morning in America, then sepulchral corner offices populated with only the bad debts of the wheeler-dealers who built them. Welcome to the Sun Belt Pompeii.

Yet there's a kinder, gentler way of life among the ruins. The immaculately preserved infrastructure still says *tomorrow*, but the city's restored congeniality seems touchingly old-fashioned; visitors are startled by Dallas's small-town livability. Sure, there are places more picturesque and stimulating. But sample the entirely serviceable cultural life and ethnic diversity, check out the beckoning real estate bargains, and do what every sojourner in this city still driven by hopes and dreams does: Imagine yourself living here on your salary.



KEVIN O'BRIEN

Where to Stay

PLACES FROM WHICH YOU, TOO, CAN DO DALLAS

Mansion on Turtle Creek. Conceived by H. L. Hunt's billionairess daughter Caroline as a lavish oil baron Venetian stage set for visiting celebrities and plutocrats, the Mansion is the definitive statement of arrival for those who care, peerless theater for those who don't. At the adjacent Mansion restaurant, the restored home of a 1920s cotton magnate, nouvelle society preens while supping on five-star Southwest-nouvelle cuisine. The bar has a gamy, English-country house coziness and the city's tonniest hookers. Address: 2821 Turtle Creek Boulevard; telephone: 214-559-2100. Cost: $220–$310.

Omni Melrose Hotel. Two VIP floors in this recently refurbished 1930s building live up to the European style billing, but the rest is much closer to Texas style, populated with a mixed cast (many of them Texans on intrastate junkets) ranging from the hip to the unconscious. The Melrose's Landmark Café serves Dallas's power breakfast. If the wood-paneled Library Bar is good enough for John Tower, it's good enough for you. 3015 Oak Lawn; 521-5151; $110–$140.

The Stoneleigh Hotel. Trending upscale, but still a warmly eccentric hangout for visitors of artistic bent, fortunately, no one has bothered to replace the bad salon paintings in the lobby. Right across

the street is the Stoneleigh P, Dallas's most heterogeneous, user-friendly bar, with a surprising jukebox and splendid burgers. 2927 Maple Avenue, 871-7111. $105–$135

A Reality Check

HOW TO AVOID THE TYPICAL TOURIST BLUNDERS

For all its striving after "international city" status, Dallas clings fiercely to its Tex-ethnicity. So that you're not mistaken for a Yankee ("Yank-kuh"), learn to **Talk Like a Texan.**

"Y'all"—the plural of "you."

"Good ol' boy"—someone a defunct S&L should have asked for collateral. Life member of the NRA.

"Bubba"—individual with a gun rack in the cab of his pickup, but who has never heard of the NRA.

"Bidness"—business. For optimum authenticity, pronounce as monosyllabically as possible—more like "buns." Hint: Try it while chewing on the obligatory postprandial toothpick.

Dress Like a Texan. Dallas has two seasons: unremittingly sweltering (May–September) and absolutely unpredictable (October–April). Don't worry, a dark wool suit—anything from Hugo Boss to Brooks Brothers—is always appropriate. A tropical palette, even in August, will immediately identify you as a Yank-kuh, or worse.

Drive Like a Texan. When you get to DFW Airport, rent an automobile. Dallas is as car-dependent as Los Angeles, but without the concomitant woes, the only rush hour you will probably notice is the lunchtime vehicular stampede. Hint: When you're entering a freeway, stop dead at the end of the ramp. Everybody else does.

Good Food Guaranteed

THE LAST THING YOU WANT TO DO ON A SHORT TRIP IS WASTE A MEAL

Dallas claims to have more restaurants per capita than New York City, and even exports its culinary culture; the clones of **Stuzzi** (2504 McKinney Avenue, 871-2606), an Armani-and-angel-hair Italian concept, have been equally clamorous in New York and Boston. But it's more fun to narrow the vast spectrum down to a regional précis: **Southwest Nouvelle: Baby Routh,** the economy class version of Southwest nouvelle shibboleth **Routh Street Café,** legitimized the downscale approach for even the most image-conscious Dallas diners, and remains a necessary pilgrimage (2708 Routh Street, 871-2345). Even more deeply discounted regional fare classifiable as either budget Southwest nouvelle or upscale New Mex–Mex is offered by **Blue Mesa Grill** (5100 Belt Line, 934-0165) and **Brazos** (plein air dining and sidewalk people-watching at 2100 Greenville Avenue, 821-6501). But the throbbing trend in Dallas cuisine is curiously middle of the road: moderately priced, Southwest-inflected but basically mainstream New American dishes served professionally but unpretentiously in tastefully understated postmodern environs. See and be seen at **Buffalo Club** (2323 Elm, 748-2400), appease



COWBOY CULTURE

WHERE TO GO IF YOU'RE A DOWNTOWN DUDE

Dallas has a downtown arts district characterized by a new, parabolic symphony hall by I. M. Pei, but the place for interesting indigenous culture is DEEP ELLUM, a low-rent commercial district when local artists began arriving in the late 1870s. The anticipated real estate scene never took off, but the galleries, clubs, restaurants, and secondhand boutiques have persisted, among the holdover prosthesis, auto-repair, and sheet-metal shops. Elm Street strollers are also polyglot: neobikers and neointelligentsia, musicians lugging their guitar cases up the street, marchers for Jesus. BARRY WHISTLER GALLERY offers national-class regional artists priced to sell (2909A Canton Street). EUGENE BINDER GALLERY the same at call-your-broker-first prices (840 Exposition Avenue). Deep Ellum's cleanest art bar is the ART BAR, with rotating exhibits of established locals at 2803 Main Street. DAVE'S ART PAWN SHOP serves coffee instead of liquor; the decor is established by the tile-adhesive swirl on the bare slab floor, and the art on display is commensurately rawer (2544 Elm).

CLUB DADA, at 2720 Elm, is Dallas's definitive music venue; a couple of years ago you could have caught Edie Brickell and the New Bohemians before they went nearly double platinum and Edie started dating Paul Simon. The latest Club Dada chanteuse to make good is Sara Hickman, now with Elektra, but Dada is also the place to hear quirky postmodern groups yet to sign with a major label; Ten Hands is the local favorite.

Best food is the New American served in bare-brick ambience at the DEEP ELLUM CAFÉ (2706 Elm), funkiest food at ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION—grilled sandwiches, a parked Silver Streak trailer, and lawn furniture add up to a sidewalk minicafé at 2712 Elm. But the most truly Deep Ellum–ish place to eat is across the street at EAST WIND: Vietnamese food, eclectic patronage, and the ineffable sense that David Lynch is directing.

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educated taste buds at **Chaplin's** (1928 Greenville Avenue, 823-3300), or split the difference at the **Quadrangle Grille** (2800 Routh Street, 979-9022).

Tex-Mex: There's always a Tex-Mex hole-in-the-wall of the moment, but since everybody will ask if you went to perennial **Mia's** (4322 Lemon Avenue, 526-1020), you might as well go. The breezily tropical **ZuZu** offers lardless, nouvelltish Tex Mex (they grow their own herbs—organically) served sans waitpersons (6423 Hillcrest, 521-4456, 5940 Royal Lane, 739-1312, and 2900 McKinney Avenue, 880-0140).

Barbecue: Sonny Bryan's Smokehouse is an inescapable institution ("since 1910"—they've probably cleaned the place a couple of times since then too). Order a hickory-smoked beef-brisket sandwich and equally greasy onion rings or fries. Lunch only, at schoolboy writing desks, cheek-to-jowl with tattooed forearm truck drivers, and lawyers in starched white shirts (2202 Inwood, 357-7120).

And don't forget **Chicken Fried Steak,** a patty of chopped beef gristle fried in a floury crust and served with chicken gravy. You either love it or hate it generically, but you will love it the best at **Gennie's Bishop Grill,** which combines cafeteria service with the vinyl and-duct tape-upholstered intimacy of a small-town café. 11:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M. at 308 North Bishop Avenue.



Michael Ennis *has lived in Dallas long enough to remember when the Marcuses owned Neiman's and the Cowboys didn't have cheerleaders.*

TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

MOST SERIOUS DRINNERS. LOUIE'S. Local medlati come here to experience near brain death. 1839 North Henderson Street.

HIPPEST BAR FOR NONCLAUSTROPHOBES: B O BAR. Nice mural. 2800 Routh Street, in the Quadrangle.

BEST TOPLESS-CLUB WINE LIST: CABARET ROYALE. The reason the dancers look so classy is that they make more money than you do. 10723 Composite Drive.

WORLD'S BEST STATE FAIR: STATE FAIR OF TEXAS, usually the first three weeks in October. Prize-winning Brahma bulls and home-made preserves, girls, and cars; say "Howdy" back to Big Tex, a fifty-two-foot-tall robocowboy.

BEST TOUR IN AN ANOMALOUS CONVEYANCE: Water taxi through LAS COLINAS, a futuristic urban node near DFW, where blue glass and pink granite high-rises flank a network of canals. You won't think you're in Venice.

BEST TOURIST RODEO: MESQUITE CHAMPIONSHIP RODEO, April–September at the Mesquite Arena, 1818 Rodeo Drive. Big-screen instant replays.

BETTER NOT ASK: 1. Where was JFK shot? 2. Where was J. R. shot?



Acquisitions

ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO MEN

Still the Store. Despite corporate ingestion, **Neiman Marcus** has kept its tradition of sharp-eyed buyers. Both the original store, at 1618 Main, and the suburban flagship, at 400 NorthPark Center, have a big but carefully edited selection of suits, ties, and shoes that you won't be sorry you bought two years from now. **Boy Toys.** The right to bear arms is serious bidness heteabouts. Don't worry about the dicey neighborhood when visiting **Ray's Sporting Goods,** at 730 Singleton Boulevard. Once inside the nuclear-alert yellow brick walls, you're protected by burglar bars, barbed wire, the reassuring presence of Dallas's finest, shopping to stay competitive, and enough firepower to resurrect the contras. Everything from antique, pearl-handled Colt pistols to the latest urban-warfare technology; add serious knives, books on guns and ammo (for you guys who reload your own), camouflage gear—and a decent selection of nonlethal hardware. **Just Boots.** It's safe to wear cowboy boots again, particularly with a suit. **Just Justin** (1505 Wychliff) offers the venerable Justin line at factory-to-you prices. Or spend up to six figures per foot at **M. L. Leddy's Boot & Saddlery,** 2455 North Main Street in Fort Worth, where they've been hand-making boots for real cowboys since 1921.

Virtuous Diversions

REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT IN THE *WILD* WEST

The Real Estate Market. In case you'd like to cut your corporate overhead, Dallas has more *vacant* office space than Miami has office space. Make an offer.

Dallas is a Calvinist sort of place, where self-improvement is a religion, and vice versa; your personal deity is expected to work in concert with your personal trainer and cosmetic surgeon. So look for virtuous diversion, and don't plan on staying out late.

If you must visit a bar, find the high-rise neon marquee of the **Inwood Theatre,** catch that best-foreign-film nominee you've been curious about, then go next door to **The Lounge,** where the beautiful people have come and gone but the onyx-hued Milanese decor is still a classic, on weeknights, you're lulled by the babble of the minimalist waterfall running the length of one wall. 5458 West Lovers Lane.

Better still, try a fitness outing. Nobody from Dallas invented Lycra, but Dr. Kenneth Cooper of the **Aerobics Center** *did* invent aerobics. For a $7 guest fee, enjoy (until 9:30 P.M.) advanced exercise-physiology in a north Dallas country-club setting that includes two outdoor pools and a tree-shaded, cushioned composite jogging path meandering among duck ponds. Young professionals of both sexes work out and network with equal fervor, you'll find the same people who made Dallas's now-moribund club scene pulsate in the early 1980s renewing their electrolytes at the health bar. ■





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RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

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THE ADS FAIRLY PURR at you, promising you control over your destiny. Got yourself a computer and a modem? they ask. Then it's time to bend them to your travel whims. Start booking your own trips and buying your own tickets through an on-line travel-reservations system.

The implied question: Who needs a travel agent when you can have access to exactly the same information he gets? The message: *You've got the power.*

Maybe. Or maybe the whole thing is like telling you to trade in your Corvette for a good pair of Rockports. You've got access to exactly the same roads as an automobile. Why be dependent on Detroit for the engine, Kuwait for the gas? Put on the shoes and *you've got the power.* The power to walk.

On-line reservations systems are consumer versions of the computer booking systems used by travel agents, available to modem users directly through information service networks like CompuServe, Dow Jones, and Prodigy. They let you plan an itinerary, investigate fares, and book airline tickets, rental cars, and hotel rooms the way a travel agent does. Pay by credit card and the tickets are mailed to you, or you can pick them up at a travel agency, airline counter, or airport ticket machine.

The three main sources of on-line travel information for consumers are Travelshopper, owned by TWA, Northwest, and Delta, Easy Sabre, owned by American Airlines, and OAG Electronic Edition, operated by Official Airline Guides. When you complete a transaction on Travelshopper or Easy Sabre, the supplier involved is charged a fee. OAG works a little differently, charging you directly. Access Travelshopper or Easy Sabre on CompuServe, and all you'll pay is CompuServe's normal per-minute charge. Log on to OAG, and you'll pay a per-minute surcharge as well.



Which is not to say you can't quickly put yourself into hock with Travelshopper or Easy Sabre. Remember how long it took you to figure out Lotus 1-2-3 or the gruesome commands of the original Wordstar? Now picture yourself paying for that time at the rate of $9 an hour (prime time on PC-Link) or $12.50 an hour (CompuServe) or $17.40 an hour (prime time on Delphi). One travel agent described a client gloating about "beating the system" with self-booking, only to discover that his first reservation cost $63 in on-line time. Of course, you could go through Prodigy, which has no per-minute charges and a screen-refresh time slow enough to drive you completely insane after, oh, five minutes.

In any case, you'll probably never become as proficient at using a reservations system as a travel agent doing it every working hour of every working day. And the most convincing indicator to me that self-booking has not yet arrived is the reaction (or nonreaction) of those agents. A group usually more than happy to decry threats to their livelihood—real or imagined—they appear to regard self-booking the way Muhammad Ali must have sized up Chuck Wepner. They're not worried.

On-line services *will* help you locate the lowest fare for a given route, but even their representatives admit that they won't find you fares any *lower* than an honest agent will. But you may still want to log on, especially if you already pick your own flights using a printed timetable. With fares and schedules changing daily, sometimes hourly, not even the monthly OAG Pocket Flight Guide can keep up with every change . . . or tell you whether or not seats are available for a given flight. Doing your own research can also help eliminate some of the telephone tag involved in booking a trip. Finally, if you're already on the road and find out at 10:00 P.M. that you need to reschedule tomorrow's flight home, a modem-equipped laptop and an on-line service could save your hide.

IF YOU ALREADY PICK YOUR OWN FLIGHTS, YOU MAY WANT TO LOG ON.

That last example excepted, what I'm talking about here is using an on-line service *in conjunction with* a travel agent—an idea the services, loath to alienate agents (who, after all, use their professional versions), claim to endorse. Get an idea of the flight you want, let an agent you trust sort out the details. Got an agent you *don't* trust? Airlines occasionally offer override commissions, bonuses to agents for steering clients their way. If you think your agent is putting his interests before yours, use an on-line system to check up on him.

On-line booking is no panacea then, but if you have the urge to try it out, be my guest. Go nuts. Just remember that time is money . . . and keep a clock next to the computer, okay? ■

BY GLENN EICHLER

ALEXA GRACE



TRAVEL HOTLINE

AND DAMN FRESH COFFEE TOO

American Airlines says it will spend $3.4 billion over the next five years to revamp first and business classes on international flights. We're talking redesigned seats, individual video players, upgraded meal service—the works. Air France has already begun a similar upgrade, although it will spend only a paltry $485 million.

STAY HOME, WE DON'T CARE

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts' new Private Reserve corporate program makes the group's concierges available to corporate clients—whether they're staying at a Four Seasons or not. Other perks include room upgrades when available, twenty-four-hour business services, and express check-in and check-out.

PRAY THEY DON'T INSTALL BOOTHS

After six years of having all the planes to itself, in-flight-telephone supplier Airfone is having its channel chopped by the Federal Communications Commission. Airfone will continue to operate, but the field—er, sky—is now open to competitors.

EAT AND RUN

Where to Dine with Your Fellow Carnivores

GUYS LIKE RESTAURANTS for the same reason they like Loafers, bucket seats, and dry martinis: They make us feel very comfortable very quickly. The truth is, men just don't suffer hunger well and take no joy at the prospect of eating at a place called Le Pamplemousse or one where the waiters have ponytails. And who wants to deal with a dish conceptualized around a rare species of lemongrass? A man might go to such places to please a woman, but never to please himself, his buddies, or his clients.

This is not to say that modern day homo carnivorous wants to eat only at steak houses named APa, and the absence of women in a restaurant is something most reasonable men would bemoan rather than bask in. Smoky sports bars with giant TV screens, BBQ joints attached to filling stations, and crab houses where you have to wash your hands *after* you eat all have their place, but what a man really likes is a restaurant where he'll be treated like a gentleman by gentlemen, dine on first rate food without much fuss, talk about the Lakers' chances this year, and feel jealous as hell over the guy at the next table with a woman who looks like Elle MacPherson.

These are Guys' Restaurants—places with wide chairs, tall drinks, short menus, and spacious men's rooms. The dining room must be spirited and well lit, ring with guffaws not heehaws, have neither Vivaldi nor Andreas Vollenweider wafting through the din, and have an Irish bartender who's never been asked to make a bellini.

Here are some of the best Guys' Restaurants in the country. None, you will notice, are in Aspen or Amagansett.

NEW YORK

The Post House (28 East Sixty-third Street, 212-935-2888). This is where you'd take a European businessman to show him how terrific American food can be, like herb-roasted medallions of lamb, planked salmon, venison chili, soft-shell crabs, and cottage fries. The folk art, antiques, and paintings of zaftig nudes give the place a more raffish charm than the sawdust-and-checkered-tablecloth decor of some simpleminded steak houses around town.

LOS ANGELES

Pazzia (755 North La Cienega Boulevard, 213-657-9271). L.A. restaurants are often contrived set pieces, but Pazzia looks natural, welcoming, and professional, from the widely spaced tables and spare modern artwork to the brisk service and open kitchen. The Italian food is authentic and hearty, and if you can't resist more than one dish, order two or three. It's rarely crowded at lunch, so it's an ideal place to take a business associate.



SAN FRANCISCO

Jack's (615 Sacramento Street, 415-986-9854). A wonderfully dated pre-earthquake (that's the Big One in 1904) Guys' Restaurant where you'd expect to find Herb Caen scarfing up the mutton chop, the broiled calf's liver with bacon, and the delicious fresh crab salad. Jack's is the inspiration for faddish new grills around town, but this is the true granddaddy of them all.

HOUSTON

Tony's (1801 Post Oak Boulevard, 713-622-6778). Despite the society crowd that comes for dinner and the Junior Leaguers at lunch, Tony's is the best place for men to clinch or celebrate the big deal over superb Italian food or a first rate bowl of chili, accompanied by a selection from one of America's great wine lists. Owner Tony Vallone is the kind of host who has never gotten a request he can't or won't fill.

KANSAS CITY

Tha Savoy Grill (Ninth and Central streets, 816-842-3890). If you can't sit in the front room, with its fabulous long bar and frontier murals (the place opened in 1903), don't bother. If you can snare a booth, you'll feel cocooned and coddled, ready to face the broiled lobster, deviled crab, oysters Rockefeller, and a good K.C. strip steak. Leave room for the cheesecake.

CHICAGO

Shaw's Crab House (21 East Hubbard Street, 312-527-2722). Shaw's looks venerable, but it's been in town only five years. The Blue Crab Lounge's raw bar is good for a quick lunch, but business is better conducted over the superb clam chowder, crab cakes, hashbrowns, and a bottle of sauvignon blanc in the sprawling main dining room.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Occidental (1475 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, 202-783-1475). Located on the site of a famous political hangout, the new Occidental has real swagger, with its dark wood, heavy drapes, and 2,500 politicians' portraits—the perfect place to allow a lobbyist to bend your elbow. Chef Jeff Buben is a modern master, from his charred tomato soup and robust game dishes to his chocolate desserts. ☙

BY JOHN MANIANI

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Mason *(continued from page 153)*



SULLIVAN, 1964: HERE'S YOUR YARMULKE, WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?

A FEW DAYS later, over blintzes in a New York coffee shop, I bring up my reminiscences of the Ed Sullivan incident. Reflexively, Jackie's hackles rise, his gaze congeals to a bale. This is no surprise. Even though Jackie's sworn version of the celebrated "You got a finger for me, I've got a finger for you" incident has been "proven" to be accurate (on a Barbara Walters 20/20 segment no less—from the tape you can see Mason was mad at Sullivan, but at no time did he extend a middle finger), it is clear the comedian hasn't completely distanced himself from the most paroxysmal moment of his tempestuous career. "I blame the Jews," Jackie blurts, two and a half decades later. "The next day every Jew said they saw me do a filthy gesture. There was no filthy gesture. But it made them happy to see a big man wiped out."

Edgy self-destruction is a recurring theme in Jackie's career.

Leaving aside the subtext of this archetypal TV moment—that is, while it would have been impossible to misconstrue some one like Bob Hope, or George Jessel, or even some patent "wild man" like Don Rickles giving the all-powerful Ed Sullivan the finger, the notion of a pushy mocky like Jackie Mason doing it was perfectly believable—I decide to take another tack. "I bet the Sullivan thing was your biggest break, at least in the long run."

That gets Jackie going. His doughy face blushes, his fireplug body rises like a blocky hovercraft above the blintzes, and he's pacing around the deli. Elderly waiters carrying cups of hot coffee are forced to perform pirouettes to dodge the bantam star. "Schmuck! How could something that loused up my career for twenty five years be my biggest break? What kind of motbid bastard are you?"

Actually, I was only trying to help. As Jackie has said, "A Jew assumes every question is answerable, except he's just not smart enough to know what that answer is." For Jackie, at least since his "overnight success" on Broadway, the question has been, "Why now? Why, after doing the same thing I've been doing for thirty years, should I be a hit?"

Consider, for instance, the historical perspective 1956, after all, when Jackie Mason first began telling jokes for money at the Pearl Lake Hotel, in Parksville, New York, was another time altogether. Wood encased Philcos had begun to figure in the furniture scheme of Bronx apartments alongside the plastic-covered sofas, but the Tube hadn't yet centerpieced itself as the arbiter of American social life. Many of the great Jewish comics, like George Burns, Jack Benny, and Groucho Marx, had already crossed over, regimmicking their well-honed personas to accommodate the new medium. Others, like Milton Berle, Ernie Kovacs, and Sid Caesar, with their most prominent writers, people like Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner, were more instrumental in orchestrating the coming idea of a nationwide spectacle. Then there were the standups, tightly wound hand wringers mutated from the line of traditional badchanim, or jesters, the self-deprecating shtetl merrymaker who had been a staple of Jewish cultural life since the Middle Ages. The comic problem confronting these new talkers was unique. On one hand, they worked in the shadow of the Holocaust and tended toward terminally paranoid, postbomb nihilism; on the other, they were living in America, where, for the first time, it seemed, a Jew didn't have to keep his bags packed, ready to flee in the middle of the night. In America, a Julius Garfinkle might be a John Garfield, a Bernie Schwarz, Tony Curtis. And there was no reason a Yid couldn't come springing out the suburban screen door like any Ozzie or Harriet.

Amid this vertigo of social mobility, however, many Jews, at least those unable to shake a sense of *differentness*, found it difficult to separate the (Franz) Kafkaesque from the (Norman) Rockwellesque. Doom behind, assimilation ahead. The existential positioning proved endlessly seductive to the bundled anxieties of this new breed of badchanim. Filtering their impressions through the semisubversive urban bohemianism of the time, they couldn't wait to tell you all about it.

Of these "candy store" comics (many of them actually hung out in candy stores, most prominently Hanson's in New York), the stand-ups sought to lay claim to various territory. Shelley Berman was the cerebral neurotic, Mort Sahl the urbane political commentator, Buddy Hackett the eye-rolling buffoon, Woody Allen the psychoanalyzed nebbish-cum-bon-vivant. Then there was Lenny Bruce, who put a new spin on hip by attempting, among other things, the de demonization of ten letter words like *cocksucker* through constant repetition.

Jackie Mason was by far the most "Jewish" of these performers. Although much of his material was standard for the day—gibes at the Kennedys, astronaut jokes, et cetera—looking as he looked, talking as he talked, there was nothing else he could be.

Jackie was the most Jewish of Jewish comics because he was the most Jewish to start with. To fans, the saga is familiar: how Eli Maza, once an eminent rabbi of Minsk, in the Polish-Russian Pale, fled the cossack death squads and wound up, with a surrealness peculiar to the refugee's journey, in Sheyboygan, Wisconsin, which is where Jackie, then Jacob, the youngest of six children, was born. The elder Maza's idiosyncratic dream of establishing an enduring Orthodox Jewish congregation on the Midwest Tundra soon faded, and the



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family moved to the corner of Rutgers and Madison streets on New York's Lower East Side. It was a lot like Poland on the Lower East Side in those days. "At least a Jew can be a Jew here," Jackie's father declared. It was a foregone conclusion that each of the four Maza sons would study in the Yeshiva and become great scholars of the Talmud. For Gabe, Joseph, and Bernie, it was easy. Jackie had other ideas. The only Maza child born in America, Jackie was a wholly different species of ethnic. He felt himself on the threshold of a great new font of information and emotion, a place with streets and smells all its own. This was somewhere to walk around in, to look forward to a future in, not the ephemeral product of a dark and mystic fever, where unfathomable codes could only be kept alive in the brooding minds of men without a country. It is some super-Yiddish amalgam of *Golden Boy* and *The Jazz Singer*, the sound of Jackie's father's voice thundering through the steamy, soot-caked tenement in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, screaming, "Learn! Study!" and Jackie going through the motions, reading the foreign scrolls, but all he wanted to do was buddy-up with sleekly dressed left-hookers like Al "Bummy" Davis and wisecrack with the cigarette-smoking neighborhood *k'nakers*.

"Every day my father would scream what an ignoramus I was," Jackie recalls. "My brothers were so much more brilliant than me, he told me. How could I ever come up to them?" After the steady torrent of boom-box enunciation, Jackie becomes nearly inaudible when he talks about how he first became a cantor, and then a rabbi, just as his three brothers did. He led congregations in properly incongruous locales such as Latrobe, Pennsylvania—Arnold Palmer's hometown—and Weldon, North Carolina. Jackie provides scant details on these episodes. "The past doesn't interest me," he says, looking away. "As for trying to remember everything that ever happened to a person, I see it as sick vanity that leads nowhere." Not that any of this is a deep, dark secret. There's never been a Jackie Mason press kit that omitted the rabbi angle, you can be walking down the street with Jackie, or sitting in a restaurant, and all of a sudden, apropos of nothing, he'll break out in a hosanna. But this is something Jackie has yet to commit to easy shtick. "I did it all to make my father happy, and it was a very painful thing for me, because it was a complete fake. I wasn't that person, I was someone else."

He thought he was a star. He *knew* he was a star. Even at the Pearl Lake Hotel, moonlighting from his husboy job to open for third-rate *tumlers* who'd exhaust their mother-in-law gags in the first five minutes and subsist on humiliating members of the audience after that, Jackie was certain he was "one of the funniest Jews in the world." He resigned the rabbinate, changed his name to Jackie Mason, told jokes full time. From then on, everything clicked. He played the big rooms, made the Jack Paar show, became Ed Sullivan's favorite comic. Until that night.

His agent, friends, family told him to be patient, it would blow over. Soon enough he'd be back in the top clubs, back on the *Tonight* show. It didn't happen that way. Even after Sullivan, who screamed he'd make sure the comic "never got on television again," publicly apologized and asked Jackie back on his show, it didn't blow over. Like Jackie says, the story was just too sweet, who wanted to believe Jackie Mason *didn't* give Ed Sullivan the fingrr? Then it was into the late Sixties, a completely different dynamic was afoot, and the immigrant's drama that Mason personified seemed faintly embarrassing, irrelevant.

He didn't go broke. Recalling his "dead years," Jackie says, "People would wonder if I was lying in a gutter, rattling a cup, when I was making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year." But it wasn't enough. He felt ostracized, an outcast once again. Forever branded as "too Jewish," he longed to foist his rubber face upon the gentiles, to make them *look* at him. There were failed Broadway plays, misguided traveling road shows, abortive low-budget movies. *The Stoolie*, directed by pre-*Rocky* John Avildsen, a grimy allegory of a local loser, was Jackie's art picture.

Jackie remains a link to a brawnier time, a living ethnosaur.

It won obscure awards at brand-X film festivals, but, sans jokes, confused the fans who came to laugh, and was met with indifference by everyone else. Most of Jackie's time in those days was spent trying to induce rich Jews to back his reentry into the big time. Some did not really have money, their own at least. Jackie knew he was walking the nether side, but that didn't matter. Once, when he was down in Miami playing the Saxony Hotel, Jackie contacted Meyer Lansky, whose son-in-law Mason once utilized as a valet. He asked the myth-shrouded mob genius permission to play his life in a "fictionalized" feature film. Jackie produced the script. Lansky objected to a scene in which his character's wife gives birth to a child with a clubfoot, then turns to the gangster and says, "This is God's punishment for your sins," prompting him to hit her. The film was never made. In 1976, Jackie, with his own money, rented out a decaying boxing arena in Queens, planning to showcase a Vegas-style revue. On opening night it rained. The roof leaked. Umbrellas were opened, but it didn't help—the sound system didn't work, no one could hear anything anyhow.

THERE IS a passage in Jackie's intermittently affecting "autobiography," *Jackie, Oy!* in which Mason describes his rabbi father walking down a street on the Lower East Side. "I saw this tragic figure," Jackie writes, "bent with loneliness, unable to earn enough to feed his family, always with secondhand food in his pocket and secondhand items on his back, taking what charity he could get. Someone gave him a dollar, someone gave him a candle. This tragic figure was my father." Now Jackie says, "My father lived for an idea. The Talmud was everything to him. It *was* his life." Hearing that makes you wonder how Jackie would feel if he saw himself coming out of the New York Deli, walking down Fifty-seventh Street, wearing not secondhand garments but his usual expensive double-breasted suits and Dior ties. Indeed, there is a melancholy irony in the fact that forty-five years later, Jackie, in a very real way, has filled the role his father used to play for the fresh-from-steerage multitudes. Implicit in Eli Maza's tirade for his youngest son to "learn" was the notion that he was the heir to a specialized, highly perishable kind of knowledge. Under constant assault from Nazis, cossacks, the relentless churn of the melting pot, and sheer forgetting, what Rabbi Maza knew was a link to another, deeper realm, people *needed* what he knew, needed to know *he* knew it. That's how it is with Jackie, for, as with his father, it seems as if he exists for no other purpose but to deliver his message. Jackie's message is the Joke.

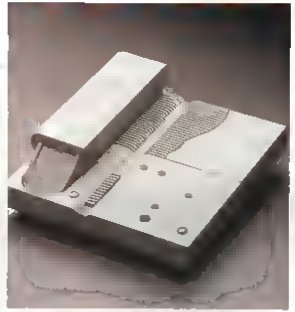
You take away the Joke and Jackie ceases to exist. He makes a fortune, but doesn't seem to care very much about money, except in the sense some "sick, phony

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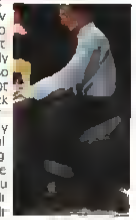
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Everything you like about Jackie is tangled with stuff you hate.

fuck" might attempt to shyster him out of a nickel in keeping with the ghetto legacy, he owns no property and doesn't drive a car. He maintains very little of his former religious life. Aside from an aversion to shrimp (he can't stand the idea of a fish with feet), he's not kosher and doesn't keep the sabbath. He is still close with his family, but says they've never really "understood" his life. His brothers—Bernie, the rabbi from Queens, and Joseph, a mohel who, people say, has circumcised half of north Jersey—come to his shows, but Jackie wonders if they "get it." His manager, the ubiquitous and worshipful Jyll Rosenfeld, acts as his interface with most of the day-to-day humdrum. She picks out almost all his clothes and chose the furniture in the small, spare apartment Jackie has lived in for several years. Once, people say, there was a romantic attachment between the two, but now that's over. Jackie's never been married and almost certainly never will be; he's not interested in children. This is one Jew, at least, who doesn't seem to care if his line stops here and now. Sure, Jackie will give out his phone number to any blond shiksa under thirty, but as far as he's concerned, the real sex—*National Enquirer*–hyped paternity suits aside—is to stand in front of a crowd and, in his typically embattled phrase, "fight for laughs."

routine about how Leona Helmsley didn't pay her taxes. Like a hoarding cabalist, he keeps everything in his head. Searching for rhythm—always rhythm—Jackie scans decades of ad libs, offhand remarks, set routines, he's never said a line he doesn't remember. You never know when it might come in handy. If something got screams in Vegas ten years ago, no reason it shouldn't again. But you've got to move, stay current. Sure, people like the old favorites, but tell a Jew too many jokes he's heard before, he'll be demanding a discount, a refund, an extra ticket for his brother-in-law. So throw in some Donald Trump stuff, a riff about food fads—whatever turns up on CNN. This "neutral" material doesn't work as well as the mighty Jew gentile dichotomies, but it's the flow that counts, the overall onslaught. Jackie will invent a joke on his way up the steps to the stage, juxtapose it to something he's done for thirty five years, and wham. Then the surge begins, the rising wave of a life's work. The little arms gyrate, pumping like a cross between Pete Townshend's windmill chord and a Navy semaphorist, Yiddishisms bat out the bilingual counterpoint, all of them whack-



GIULIANI, 1989. HOW MANY JEWS DOES IT TAKE TO SCREW UP A CAMPAIGN?

Laughs he gets. Jackie will lambaste you and call you a limp-wristed putz should you insinuate he is an artist. But of course, that is what he is. In his knockabout style, he is a peerless master. Watching him get ready for a show is a trip. He sits in the corner of the room and davens. Knitting his blunt-end fingers through his reddish hair (my mother swears it used to be black), singing in muffled cantorial cadences, he might as well be leading a High Holy Day ceremony, but instead he's going over a rolled home with loud, guttural shouts of "Eh? What? You won't laugh, putz? Then take this! That!" It's as if he's on Göring's neck, gnashing through the windpipe, demanding the laugh before the final gasp.

THE PACKAGE IS undeniable, especially if you happen to be a Jew of a certain age. Although Jackie, who is strangely giant in England, will often rate the effectiveness of a show by how much the gentiles laugh, he knows it's the Jews who keep him in business. "I suppose you could say I represent something special to people," he says, "that my comedy has an element of something that is more personal or more meaningful, more of a thing to them because of their background, or what their family represents, their history. It's not just an appreciation for my jokes, but a real love in their hearts. You *don't know what you mean to my mother! My father was saying your jokes when he passed away.* It's like they look at me and they see something in themselves they're afraid they're going to lose, or maybe they've already lost. I feel almost a desperation in their love for me."

Because of Sullivan, he got frozen out of the culture, and while everything else got homogenized, he stayed the way he was, a Jew in amber. The personal diaspora he experienced after the Sullivan incident was really his salvation, I expound, his exile the key to his comeback. For even if it's quite possible that the "finger" scene was an accident waiting to happen, that the Jackie Mason who defied his imposing father couldn't wait to assault—and be crushed by—an authority figure like Big Ed Sullivan, you can still imagine Jackie's career going a very different way. It's conceivable that, accent and all, he'd have been offered some lame *Chicken Soup*–type show in 1968, or 1974, and, with its success, been domesticated into a Hebrew version of Jimmie Walker, or a *haimish* Freddie Prinze. Jackie could have crossed over into a realm of mass cuddliness, who knows, he might have gone all the way to canonization as a Beloved Entertainer, in the manner of his great idol, Jack Benny. But that's nor what happened. He was kept out, branded "filthy" and/or "too Jewish," barred from the trend of the past two and a half decades. In many ways, you can say, he stayed as he was in 1960, that in him you can still sense the same unresolved identity/assimilation conflict that made the stand-ups of his generation so compelling. Now, long after Lenny Bruce (who made himself into the half-mad Jewish Lear, reading his indictments from the stage) fell onto a bathroom floor with a needle in his arm, years past the time dozens of lounge-rat Shecky Greenes and Alan Kings have dissipated whatever marginal emotional force they once possessed, Jackie Mason remains to tell thee, full of spite and bile perhaps, but still a link to a brawnier, more expansive time, a living ethnosaur.

Truly, Jackie is one of a kind. This doesn't mean that in terms of raw talent he exceeds Robin Williams or Steve Martin, or that you can't find bigger laughs elsewhere. It's just that Jackie has something the hundred haircut-intensive comics on HBO specials whose only background appears to be Saturday-morning television can never match, no matter how facile or "outrageous" they may be. How "outrageous" are they anyway? Would Andrew "Dice" Clay ever give Arsenio Hall the finger, even if half his act puts down blacks? Is he that ballsy, ready to put his real shit on the line? No way. We're all brothers in the Business, bro. Indeed, next to Jackie, the work of Rodney Dangerfield, Mason's great, hated rival ("a low-class bigmouth who can't wait to louse me up on every street corner"), is reduced to a hilarious but ultimately gimmick-ridden and dispassionate series of one-liners. That's because Jackie Mason is *from somewhere*. A *specific* somewhere—when he went to Israel, they didn't buy the act, he wasn't their kind of Jew. Jackie comes out of a singular, fleeting American experience. In this day and age, that is something to covet, even desperately.

THAT, MORE OR LESS, is the good news. But it doesn't stop there, for every ethnosaur has his flip side. What I mean is, after four or five nights in a row of hanging with Jackie and the gang, you can feel things begin to go blooey. In fact, you can feel yourself traveling—through another dimension—back to—a Brooklyn apartment with dark wood furniture, and there you are, standing with your older relatives, looking out a seventh-story window, down to a body below, a man sprawled across the asphalt, blood seeping from his ruined head, and you know—everyone's wondering: Was it a Jew?

Jew-Jew-Jew. It's such a Jewish thing. That's how it is with Jackie. Sit with him and his crew of walk-around guys—the New Jersey theater owner, the Long Island real estate magnate, the trumpet player who makes "real human voices" come out of his horn—and count how many times the word *Jew* comes up. You'll hit triple figures before the second course. "Them and Us" is the theme. You try to dismiss the self-referentiality as typical of the exile, to say every ethnic group does the same thing. But it wears you down. It freaks you out.

For many, much of the uneasiness they feel when confronted by Jackie Mason is exacerbated by the comedian's recent status as a Public Hebrew. Since his comeback, Jackie, never one to know his place, has rebelled against the confining definition of "entertainer." Now he's a "spokesman." In this mode, Jackie has become something of a regular on the Washington lecture-brunch-Bible-reading-schmooze circuit. He's done fundraisers for senators like Rudy Bauschwitz of Minnesota and Arlen Spector of Pennsylvania. He pals around with Howard Metzenbaum, Frank Lautenberg, Al D'Amato, and Paul Simon are also friends. Given this mixed crew, Jackie's own political views tend toward the eclectic. Although he now privately says he's against settlement on the West



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Bank (Israel is the only issue he won't touch onstage—the reaction of his core audience scares even him), he's been an on-and-off supporter of the lunatic Meir Kahane, a vociferous racist. And even though Jackie spent a large portion of his *World According to Me* show knocking the Reagan administration, his "scrapbook" contains a note from Oliver North thanking Mason for inviting him to the comic's Kennedy Center show. North had to decline, he said, because "as you know, I have been quite busy with the sentencing process." When asked if it bothers him that several pols might see him as nothing more than a "house Jew" to worm money and votes, much in the fashion that Nixon used to drag Wilt Chamberlain around to show his "strength" in the black community, Jackie shrugs. "Politics is my hobby," he says. "I like to see how these people operate. If they're using me, I'm using them."

Anyway, it's municipal affairs that are really Jackie's passion. New York is his town. A semiserious mayoral candidate in 1973, he likes to "participate in the life of the city." He has written several columns for the *Times* op-ed page, most recently about his trip to Eastern Europe. Jackie saw no advantage in American freedom of the press, since "everyone in New York is afraid to go out to buy the paper." It was the 1989 mayoral race in which Jackie really made a difference, though. In fact, some analysts are of the opinion that without Jackie's now-infamous "fancy *schvartzer*" reference, the Republican Giuliani, who wound up losing by less than 3 percent in a town where Democrats represent more than 75 percent of registered voters, would have won. Bill Lynch, David Dinkins's campaign manager and now a city deputy mayor, first attempts to downplay the effect of Mason's comments, then offers a smile and allows, "You could say it was a turning point in the election."

Others are less politic. They say it was *the* turning point, that Jackie's crack and the uproar following it went a long way toward destroying Giuliani's carefully constructed image as an unbiased crime fighter to whom color did not matter.

Mason's *schvartzer* gaffe played right into the corrosive tension between the black and Jewish communities in New York, for many it was the perfect companion piece to Jesse Jackson's similarly alienating "Hymietown" reference in the 1984 presidential campaign—both men casually uttered the fateful phrases to "friendly" newsmen and then claimed they never imagined the depth of the offense that would be taken. The unfortunately coiffed Giuliani could have avoided the whole snafu, however, if only he and his equally asleep-at-the-switch advisers had played a tape of Mason's memorable performance at the 1988 Grammy Awards. Jackie managed to stop the show cold by telling jokes about blacks breaking into cars and white people lying on the beach attempting to turn black. Taken one at a time, none of the lines were particularly objectionable, but the sheer weight of them, one after another, told to a mixed, moderately hip crowd a lot more interested in Terence Trent D'Arby than Jackie Mason made for the kind of slow death only a truly bombing comic can generate.

Jackie will tell you he's not a racist. He'll say he didn't mean anything by the *schvartzer* comment, that it only means *black* and what else do you call a black but black. He'll even make you laugh trying to convince you of his innocence. When he starts in on the "Giuliani *tsimmes*," describing how everyone was arguing about what he meant—"Did he say

He'll tell you Mandela is "a schmuck," then lambaste Tutu.

schvartza? Did he say *schvartzo*? Where did this word come from? Did it come from Russia? From Pittsburgh?"—it's almost impossible to maintain a disapproving look. Much of his counterattack is launched against his Jewish accusers, the same "snooty intellectuals" Jackie has always felt saw him as "too Jewish," a "vulgar sort of embarrassment who deals only in stereotypes." For Mason, who has long claimed that the same types who sneer at Jerry Lewis will go crazy over the exact joke told by Woody Allen, this is a class issue, pure and simple, and he responds to it in his usual combative fashion. After the *schvartzer* incident, during a show at the Public Theatre, Jackie called Elie Wiesel, the famous Holocaust historian and a prominent Mason detractor, "a putz." That really shook them up, in certain circles, giving Ed Sullivan the finger, even labeling David Dinkins a *schvartzer*, is one thing, but calling Elie Wiesel a putz is a whole other kettle of gefilte.

But you can tell, Jackie just doesn't get it. To this day he insists the *schvartzer* comment was a joke, that he's a comedian, nothing else. Despite the racially tense situation in the city and the presence of Roger Ailes, who invented Willie Horton for George Bush, as Giuliani's media consultant, Jackie refuses to entertain the idea that the *context* in which his remark was made had anything to do with the reaction to it. It's all unfair, he rails, another sandbag job like the Sullivan thing. Why don't they talk about all the money he's given to the NAACP, or write how he went to Selma in the 1960s? A day later, he'll be riding in a limo through the South Bronx, telling you even if he was received at the Grammys "like Hitler at a bar mitzvah," it had nothing to do with the content of what he said. "I stunk, that's all. It wasn't funny. I just looked at all those black faces and I froze. I lost my place, so I stunk." Then, after swearing he's played black places and "gotten screams" with the same material, he looks out the window of the limo at the bombed-out landscape and exclaims, "Look at how they live!" A couple of days after that, at Madison Square Garden to receive a special commendation as the "Mayor of Broadway," as part of a special wrestling show the cops were putting on for handicapped children, Jackie bounds into the ring, looks out into the crowd of primarily minority kids in wheelchairs, lords his hands over his head like a champ, and shouts, "Only Jew in the house."

That's the wrench of being with Jackie. Everything you like about him is inextricably tangled with stuff you hate, things you wish got left at the door. And for me, that's a deep thing, because if Jackie's great value as a comic is *being from somewhere*, I'm from that same *somewhere*, to a large extent. Besides, I know that my grandmother, a Jew who was smuggled out of Romania in a potato sack by her father just ahead of the coming pogrom, would likely agree with Jackie Mason about most things. If she were alive today, she'd be threatened by blacks and others just the way he is. I'm sure of it. Once she lived at the corner of Franklin Avenue and Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. It was the greatest of treats to get to stay with her. My grandfather took me to baseball games at Ebbets Field. Carl Erskine pitched a no-hitter on my birthday one year. But then they tore down Ebbets Field, my grandfather died, and my grandmother couldn't live on Eastern Parkway anymore or work in the Kamco children's store, she was an old lady and all around her were young black people who made her afraid. I loved her, but it killed me, hearing her say things about blacks and Latinos, to know her fear was on the verge of something worse, and how all-consuming it was.

That's why a guy like Jackie Mason can mess you up. He's *so* much like those people I used to see on Passover, eating those flavorless crackers, speaking in foreign tongues. He's a vicarious trip back to that evanescent shadow world, except he won't allow you to bask in the unsullied nostalgic haze. He's constantly shoving real darkness into your face. One minute he's telling you Nelson Mandela is "a schmuck," lambasting Tutu. The next you're in a taxi buzzing down to Ratner's, the ancient, faded dairy restaurant, and suddenly three hundred people are rising as one, screaming "Jackie! Jackie!" the matzo brei on the house, everyone telling jokes, and you're thinking: This is fabulous. This is the Runyonesque New York I love, not the place worn to the nub by the yuppies and a grind of poverty and race hatred. And you know, it's a problem, one of those conundrums Jackie claims a Jew must have the answer to except he's not smart enough to think of it.

I tell Jackie this, and he just starts screaming. As far as he's concerned, I'm just another one of those liberal-putz, self-hating, bleeding-heart Jews who don't know which side their bread is buttered on. Giving "everything" away to the blacks is tonight's topic. Jackie's against it. "When's the last time a Jew ever asked a black for a handout?" he demands. "Has a black ever given a Jew a quarter?"

"There are other people in the world besides Jews and blacks," I counter.

"You don't know what you're talking about," he screams back. There is no winning. You have two alternatives. You either keep arguing, keep playing the game, or you tell him he's pathetic and you can't stomach his chauvinist bile, that it's exactly the sort of shit your parents brought you up to understand as pernicious, evil. Then you can walk out, leaving him with the check.

Faced with that choice—I dunno—I stay. Maybe I stay because we're having this fight in Kiev, a little hangout on the Lower East Side, and it's 4:00 in the morning, and the place is packed with blacks and Latinos, and weirdos of all types, and one of them, a guy wearing a dress, with a hundred hospital bracelets around his wrist, is leaning over our table, and he smells like hell, but Jackie keeps talking to him, asking tender questions about the guy's ravaged life. He does this, he says, because face-to-face, Jackie Mason might scream and yell at you, but he doesn't have the heart to turn his back.

And maybe I stay because a few nights later we're in a car, going to a synagogue in Queens. For weeks Jackie's been "practicing" the new jokes he plans to use when he returns to Broadway in the fall. A shul is as good a place as any to practice, he says. A week before, he was down in Atlantic City, where he gets as much as $65,000 a show. But tonight, everything is free. The temple, you can tell, is not exactly flush. The president, who picks us up, is still wearing his car-service chauffeur's uniform. Jackie doesn't care, $65,000 or nothing, it's all the same to him, as long as he's standing in front of an audience, "fighting for laughs." Not that he's pleased when we get to the shul. The neighborhood is "on the cusp," the temple doesn't even have enough money to buy the rabbi a house. Most of the richer congregation members have long ago moved to Florida. "Old Jews," Jackie grouses as we get out of the car, "I can't stand these old Jews. They don't get the jokes, if they do they're offended. What a waste of time this is!" He keeps complaining even as the rabbi, a small man in his seventies, comes over to shake his hand. Usually, the rabbi says, they have trouble getting a minyan, but tonight is different. Jackie Mason is here! Tonight, as many as fifty people might show up.

Then, it's the same as always. Stooped, gray-haired men and women approach, bearing photos of grandchildren, great-grandchildren. "I've seen you before," a woman says. "Everyone's seen him before," chides her husband. "Oy *gevalt*," Jackie says. But then you can tell. He's nervous. Getting ready to stand up in front of these broken-down Jews, in this broken-down temple, Jackie Mason, international sensation, is nervous. Soon, however, he's in front of the tabernacle, wearing a yarmulke, telling his jokes, mixing the old ones with the new. "I'd like you to know this is the longest a Jew has ever sat still without a piece of cake," Jackie says. "You have to watch out for Jews on cake. A Jew on cake is more dangerous than a gentile on crack any day." Now Jackie's happy. His fight plan is working, they like him. He sees the opening, so he pours it on, brings out the doctor routine, follows it with his number about Jews suing everyone. "A Jew wakes up in the morning and thinks, Who can I sue?"

When he's on, there's no mercy. You've got to give it up. I give it up. When we got to the temple, I realized I'd been there before, with my grandmother, after she'd moved away from Brooklyn. The temple's right around the corner from where she used to live. She'd go there every once in a while and pray. I figure if she was sitting in that audience, she might be tough, because she was never an easy laugh, but eventually Jackie would get to her. He'd make her laugh. Should I do less? ◻

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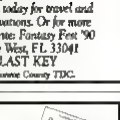
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A Letter at Last...

BRUCE McCALL
NEW YORK

Dear Lee,

Since you vacated my recent birthday fete so stylishly early—*not* a snide snipe, Lee, every man jack and woman jane in that room knew that cabs don't exist in New York after 8:00 P.M. when clouds are forecast—I feel you're owed a follow up on everything that transpired after the Carvel cake melted and the clock finally chimed two gongs shy of the witching hour.

Well, first of all, Arnold trashed the Ming vase you gave me, arm wrestling Eddie Shevardnadze. Then, when— okay, okay, I embroider. The post-Eisenberg portion of the party consisted of a dozen people sitting around a table, chin-wagging into hyperblab.

If talk is cheap, this was a fire sale. I counted sixty-seven million words uttered in total. Sixty-six million of them were not so much words as you and I know them but charged conversational particles, emitted at the speed of accelerating neutrons from a slit in the center of the crane's nest-style beard attached to the aptly yclept (as *Playboy* used to put it, as he'd be first to point out) Henry N. Beard, Esq.

Let me note by way of inadequately summarizing the above that no man in our epoch ever conjured the World Bank, North Korean gypsum-mine accordionists, British libel law, Caspar Weinberger, Latin, California oil spills, golf, Hollywood, American education, and the deliberations of the World Court at The Hague with more table-pounding, chair-tipping, Beaujolais spraying, Heimlich-maneuver-grade, windpipe-constricting mirth than did Henry N. Beard that night. It was a virtuoso one-man Wit Relief benefit performance, and the minute it was over—Henry had to hit the loo, as I recall—the assembled and disassembled soon merged with the stream of taxicabs moving south into the Manhattan night.

So none of my far-flung relatives or friends even phoned. So my own wife "forgot" to pick up even a joke gift, lamely claiming that the seven course birthday repast she'd slaved over for several days was gift enough. So my best present was a finned, tin, Made-in-China model car (at least I think it's a car) donated by Steve Smith. So I'm another year older. Isn't laughter the best gift? Or is that the best medicine? Perfect, old guys need medicine.

The guests are long gone, but my authentic 1946–1952 St. Louis Browns cap has arrived! White crown, brown bill, orange *St.* monogram, and when I clap it on and squint just so into the mirror, I can see Dick Kokos and Bob Dillinger and an entire roster of Sportsman's Park subluminaries of my youth squinting back.

I'm wearing the Sacred Skypiece as I write here in my cubbyhole-cum-office (adjacent to the dining room, where Henry of late held forth, in case you're diagraming this). But I will seldom sport it beyond these walls.

Why so shy, when Brownie Pride courses through these veins even faster than plaque? Because, sure, I got my genuine St. Louis Browns cap—but now any trendy poseur with sixteen bucks and absolutely no moral right to Brownsdom can get one, too. And I couldn't bear to be mistaken in public for one of *them*.

Fantasy camps. Topps reissues. Reproduction caps from long-expired franchises. Baseball isn't the national pastime anymore, Eisenberg, baseball *nostalgia* is the nacional pastime. Any Johnny Berardino-come-lately can now purchase instant access to my past. Your boyhood. Our souls. BARBARIANS SACK FIELD OF DREAMS!

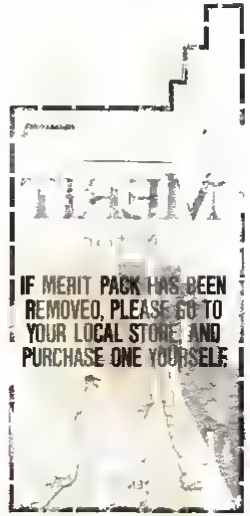
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